

# Long Journey's End

Michael Maxwell

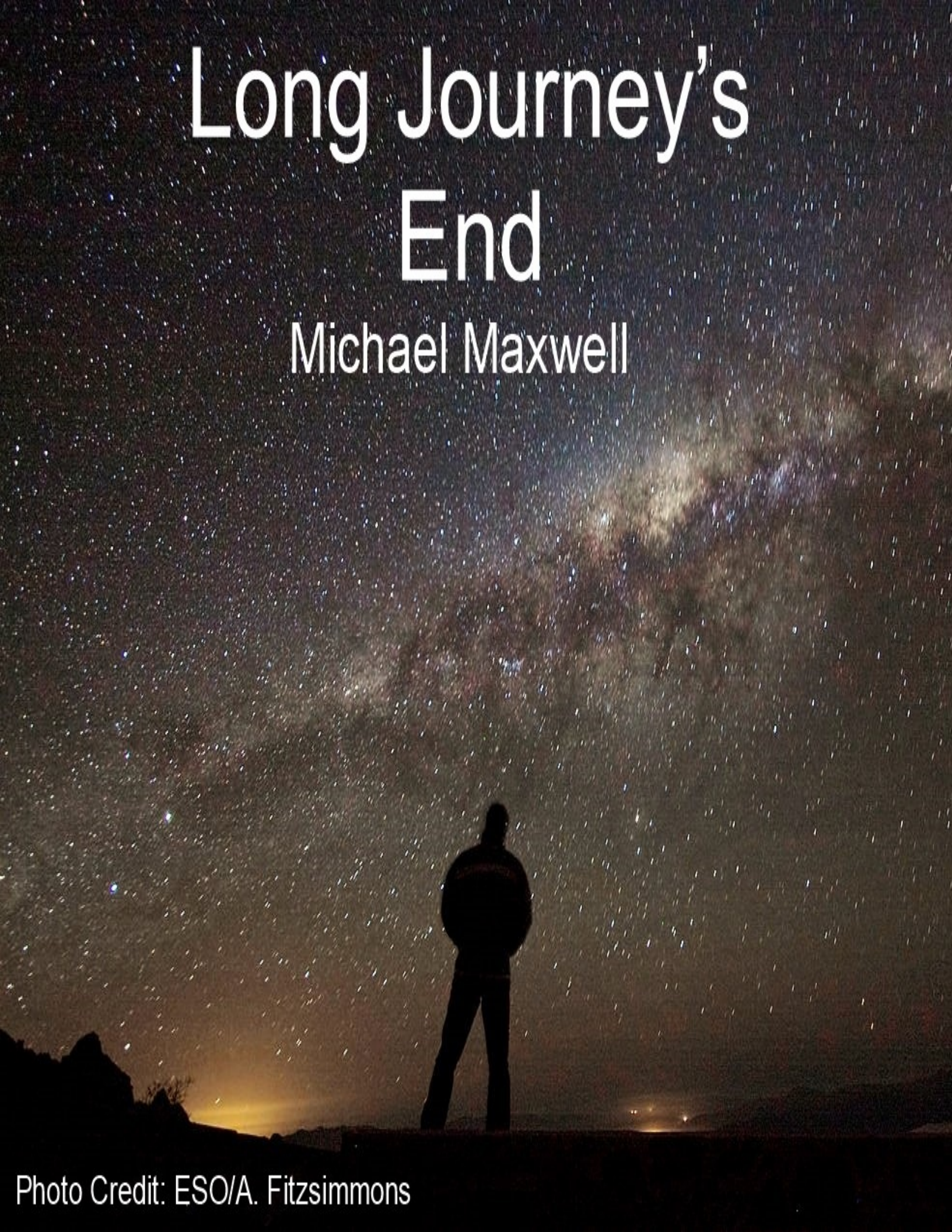


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LONG JOURNEY'S END  
a novel by  
Michael Maxwell

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## DEDICATION

*This novel is dedicated to those females in my life who have enabled me to achieve self-actualization; but in particular to my wife, my daughters, and my granddaughters, who I hope will, someday, find their own 'meaning of life'.*

Michael Maxwell

## PREFACE

All human beings are on a journey through life. But most people are too busy trying to just maintain their existence to be able to stop long enough to think about the world in which they live. Others of us have been fortunate enough to be able to pause from time to time to ask ourselves such questions as, “How was the Universe created?”, “What is the nature of the thing that created it?”, “Who am I?” and most importantly of all, “What is it that gives *meaning*<sup>\*</sup> to my life?” [ <sup>\*</sup> *The end purpose*] This is the story of one young man who found the answers to these questions and although the main character of the novel is male, it is the women in the story that enable him to find self-actualization.

The story includes references to some real persons and actual historical events, but only the spiritual experiences of the fictional characters are real. For all mystical experiences are real to those who experience them. But because we cannot explain these phenomena scientifically, there is no proof of their ‘truth’ other than what we discover for ourselves by following the path of spiritual enlightenment. And all that science can say about these possible glimpses of the *numen*<sup>\*</sup> is that they are no more metaphysical than the origin of the universe itself and might even be ‘real’. [ <sup>\*</sup> *divine presence*]

Finally, the author wishes to apologize for any possible offensive situations or language that the reader might encounter when reading the novel. It was felt that it was necessary to include these passages in the novel to lend realism to the story.

There is a bibliography at the end of the novel for those readers who have the time and wish to explore the answers to the above questions themselves.

Michael Maxwell

## PROLOGUE

August 21, 1971

Ian sat overlooking the valley of his youth. He had been completely overwhelmed by what Lorna had revealed to him the night before and he had driven all of the next morning to get to where he was. He needed time to think clearly and from somewhere deep within him had been the primal urge to seek the same refuge here at Wabagowna that he had sought fifteen years ago as a young boy. He had driven the more than four hundred miles from 'Joe's Java', stopping only long enough to get gas and coffee and it had been almost noon of the same morning when he had reached his destination. Parking his car at the foot of the mountain near where he used to hide his bicycle, he had made his way to the summit.

It wasn't really a mountain that Ian climbed but more of a very high escarpment. Twenty-five thousand years before, during the last ice-age, a glacier had swept south from the north, scraping away the soil, exposing the Cambrian rock below that eventually became limestone cliffs as it wore away. As the glacier receded it had melted, leaving the escarpment and stony, but somewhat arable, farm land behind below it. Once the glacier had fully receded, it had also left a huge bay of water about four miles from the edge of the escarpment. Nestled at the foot of the bay was Bay's End, the town in which Ian had grown up. Beyond the bay, lay one of the Great Lakes.

Reaching the summit, Ian remembered that it was also here at Wabagowna that he had often brought Martha. But now what had been their special place was no longer the same. Civilization had taken its toll. Rusting beer cans and decaying condoms lay in mute evidence that his secret place had been discovered by others and frequented often in the last ten years. Most of the branches of his and Martha's special tree were gone, systematically destroyed to feed the visible remains of campfires that young people had undoubtedly fornicated around. But at least his and her initials inside the heart that he had carved on its trunk were still visibly there, although faintly:

*I.C.*

*Loves*

*M.I.*

*True*

Ian had often wondered what happened to Martha after he had left Bay's End and she had been subsequently caught seducing another male student and been fired. He sighed sadly for her. At least her secret had always been safe with him. He looked at his wristwatch. It was noon now. And as if on cue, the time was confirmed by the faint noon-hour whistle that he could hear in the distance from the factory in which his father worked before he was fired. He looked in the direction from which the sound was coming and found the factory. Yes, it was still there, the huge white building with smoke billowing from its tall smoke stack. It was in that building that they made some of the world's finest whiskey. He also looked for the roofs of the two houses in which he had lived as a child and found them in the distance. The first house was the one in which he lived just after he was born and the one in which he had been the happiest. The

second house that he found, and where his father probably still lived, was the one in which he had spent the worst years of his childhood and adolescence. For it was there that his father had begun to systematically physically and verbally abuse him.



ELEVEN YEARS EARLIER  
April 1, 1960

It was Ian's sixteenth birthday.

"Ian, came heer. Oi wan tae tak to yee."

Ian's heart sank. "Please, I can't come right now, father. I'm doing my homework."

"Oi sayd, came heer rit noow!"

Reluctantly, Ian got up from his chair at the kitchen table, set aside the textbook from which he had been studying and walked slowly into the living room. His father sat in his favorite sofa chair, a glass of whiskey in one hand and a cigarette in the other. He was watching boxing on television. "Gae oopstairs and git the glooves," he slurred, staring drunkenly at the television.

"Please father, I don't want to."

"Please fither, oi dinna wan tae," his father mimicked. "Oi sayd, gae oopstairs and git the fookin' glooves!" He glared menacingly at Ian.

Slowly, Ian trudged up the stairs to his father's room to get the boxing gloves from under the bed. Although he was now sixteen years old, these beatings (or 'lessons in the manly art of self-defense' as his father euphemistically referred to them) had been going on since he was eight years old. It was between these beatings that Ian had pieced together his father's past.

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According to his drunken ramblings when 'in his cups', Ian's father had been born in the slums of Glasgow, Scotland. He had been the only boy in a family of seven and the 'runt of the litter'. He had weighed only five pounds at birth, unable to suckle and had to be nursed for the first month of his life by soaking a rag dipped into a saucer of his mother's milk and squeezed into his mewling mouth. Ian's Scottish grandfather was reported to have said grimly at his son's birth "Oi barely gat me bait back!"

Ian's father, who should have died at birth, was named Thomas after his own father and there was no doubt that growing up in the slums of Glasgow had been difficult for 'Wee Tam' as he came to be called, not only to distinguish him from his father but also because of his diminutive size. Being of small stature as a child, 'Wee Tam' had been bullied by just about every boy bigger than himself and made fun of by just about every girl that he knew until he was almost thirteen years old.

But upon entering puberty, 'Wee Tam' had experienced a spurt in physical development. Although he would never grow to be more than five feet, four inches tall, and shorter than most other teens his age, he became much more muscular than all of his peers as a result of the strenuous exercises that he had forced upon himself from age eight.

By the time he was sixteen and of school-leaving age, 'Tough Tam' as he was now called, could hold his own in a scrap with anyone and would often go out of his way to prove it. For 'Tough Tam' had not forgotten any of the boys who had bullied him when he was a child and as a young adult he found ways of settling old scores by provoking fights with them on Saturday nights at the local pub.

It was one of these fights that led to Tom's father giving him a one-way ticket to the United States. 'Tough Tam' had secreted a razor blade in the peak of the cap he wore and during one of his fights swiped it across his opponent's face, slashing it open. He had then 'put the boots' to the unfortunate young man, almost killing him. After that, it was leave Scotland, or face prosecution and jail and shame for his family.

Upon landing at Ellis Island, New York, Tom had hopped a freight train on the mainland and ridden it west until the rails ended at a terminal on one of the Great Lakes. Having no money left of the ten-pound note that his mother had slipped secretly to him as he said goodbye, and that he had converted to dollars on landing, he had been forced to take work on one of the local farms for a dollar a day and room and board.

With his swarthy complexion and jet-black hair, Thomas, as he now insisted upon being called, was considered to be handsome by some women whom he met and he had no difficulty in seducing and impregnating the sixteen-year-old daughter of the farmer, George Johnston, for whom he worked. Her name was Mary and she was George's only child. When confronted with the obvious by George, Thomas, at first, had denied having sex with Mary and went as far as to accuse one of the other farm hands of the foul deed. It was only after George promised to give Thomas half the farm as a dowry when Mary became of age and the other half of the farm to him upon his own death that Thomas agreed to marry her.

Seeing the opportunity to become a respectable landowner, Thomas had quickly married Mary but she died giving birth to Ian five months later and her father reneged on his promise to give Thomas half the farm and fired him instead. When Thomas attempted to leave the baby with George, he was told "He killed my only daughter. Take the little bastard with you!" Thomas had no choice but to do so because Ian was now legally his responsibility.

But Thomas too grew to resent the 'little bastard', but for different reasons. One of the reasons that he grew to resent his son was because Ian did not look at all like him. Instead of having jet black hair like his father, Ian had beautiful, blond, curly hair like his mother; instead of a swarthy, 'gypsy-like' complexion like his father, he had soft, pink skin to complement his fair hair. Thomas had black, piercing suspicious-looking eyes; Ian's eyes were blue and they sparkled with an open innocent interest in things around him; Thomas' nose was hawk-like and his face reminded one of a bird of prey; Ian's face was one that one might have been seen on a cherub. And unlike his father who had been a puny weakling at birth, Ian had shown every sign of becoming a well-built, tall and handsome young man.

But the main reason that Thomas grew to resent his son was because as Ian grew older, he became a living reminder to him of Mary and the obscene ways in which he had used her. Every time Thomas looked at Ian, he was reminded of the way that he had exploited her innocence. He hadn't loved Mary. Thomas couldn't remember having loved anyone, unless it had been the beautiful well-dressed girl who sat behind him in elementary school and made fun of his shabby clothing and holes in his shoes and poked him in the back with the sharp nib at the end of her straight-pen.

Mary had also been a virgin when Thomas met her, as evidenced by the tremendous loss of blood and pain that she had experienced when he had ripped open her hymen with his penis. But he hadn't cared about her pain at the time, just as he had not cared about the countless other virgins that he had deflowered in Scotland.

Even after Mary had become pregnant, Thomas had insisted upon having sex with her up to and during her eighth month of pregnancy, resulting with her hemorrhaging, the premature birth of Ian and the death of her. And as years went by, Ian's father was to insist more and more to whoever would listen to his drunken ramblings in the local bar that Ian was not his child.

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Ian handed his father the boxing gloves. His father took one pair and threw the other pair back to Ian who caught them instinctively. Thomas put on his own gloves. Ian stood there, still holding his.

"Poot the glooves an," his father said.

"Please father, not tonight!" Ian begged him. "I have an important examination Monday and I have to study for it," he lied.

Ian's father laughed without humor, seeing through Ian's usual subterfuge. "Oi sayd, poot the glooves an," he repeated coldly, "or oi'll strike yee doon where yee stan."

Reluctantly, Ian put on the boxing gloves. Thomas instantly went into his habitual fighter's crouch and began to circle Ian looking for an opening through which to strike him. Ian instinctively put his hands up to defend himself, his left glove protecting his face, his right glove slightly lower and poised to protect his abdomen.

"Gude! Always keep yeer gard oop," said his father and suddenly flicked his left hand between Ian's gloves, hitting him in the face. He grinned malevolently. "Happy birthday." Ian jerked his head back, his face stinging from the rough gloves and his eyes watering from the pain of the blow.

"Oi sayd keep yeer gard oop," his father repeated and tried flicking his left hand between Ian's gloves again. This time Ian deflected it. His father grunted approval, feinted towards Ian's face again with his left hand, but this time, as Ian raised his left hand to deflect the blow, drove his right glove into the left side of Ian's rib cage. When Ian moved his left hand down to protect his left side and raised his right glove to protect his face, his father crouched and threw a left hook, hitting him in the solar plexus, knocking the wind from him. Ian gasped in pain and his knees buckled slightly.

"This is gayin' tae hoort meself moor than it hoorts yee," Ian's father chuckled sadistically, laughing at the irony of the old adage his own father had used when beating him, and moved in to inflict more pain on Ian.

During the eight years that his father had systematically abused him, Ian had learned a lot about boxing—the hard way! Until now he had been reluctant to fight back too well for fear that his father might kick him out of the house and he would be unable to finish his high-school education. But by now, he had had enough! Although he was now only sixteen years old, he was bigger and stronger than he had ever been. He had inherited the robust health of his

maternal grandfather and was an excellent athlete as evidenced by the many school athletic awards that he had won. Although not as muscular or as strong as his father, he was now taller and about the same weight. He just couldn't take the abuse any longer.

Ian made a decision. He dropped his left hand, as if he was too winded to hold it high enough to protect himself and his father moved in to throw an overhand right. But before he could deliver the blow, Ian raised his left arm, blocking it, and swung his right glove across and down as hard as he could, striking his father on the left side of the jaw. His father's eyes went glassy and he dropped like the steers that he used to kill with a poll-axe on his father-in-law's farm. For a moment, Ian thought that he had killed his father and momentarily wished that he had. But his father was still alive as indicated by his twitching feet. Ian said aloud with bitterness "April Fools, father," left his father where he lay and went to bed. He was no longer afraid of him.

The next morning, Ian's father said nothing, avoided looking him in the eye and went to work. *Thank God!* Ian thought. *Now perhaps he'll leave me alone.*

But the same night, after a few drinks, his father's abuse began again. This time, it was verbal. "Ian, came heer. Oi wan tae tak to yee."

Ian's heart sank. "Please, I can't come right now, father. I'm doing my homework."

"Oi sayd, came heer rit noow."

Reluctantly, Ian got up from his chair at the kitchen table, set aside the textbook that he had been reading and walked slowly into the living room. His father was sitting in his favorite sofa chair, a glass of whiskey in one hand and a cigarette in the other. He was watching wrestling on television.

"Sit doon. Oi wan tae tak to yee." Ian sat down.

He had no sooner sat down when his father began. "Sae yee think that yeer bitter than me, dae yee, Ian?" his father slurred, staring drunkenly at the television.

"No, father."

"Tha was joost a lucky poonch last night, Ian. Oi kin tak yee anytyme oi wan tay, yee wee bastard."

"I'm a big bastard now father," Ian said evenly.

Ian's father blanched visibly. Switching strategies, he continued to attack him verbally. "Weel, yeer nay gude," he blustered.

"Yes father."

"Yeer joost like yeer mither."

"Don't speak badly of my mother," Ian warned, clenching his fists visibly. His father sensed the veiled threat and switched strategies again.

"Yeer joost a dreemer me boy. Yee'l nivver amoont to ainytheen."

"Yes father."

"Yee nivver had to woork like oi deed; had to leeve school when oi was sixteen oi deed; crawled doon rows of taters on me hands and knees oi deed, and far twenty-five pence a day."

Ian bit his tongue and made no reference to the many part-time jobs that he himself had worked at in order to save as much money as he could for his

university tuition. He had always known that his father would not help him financially and, in fact, would do everything that he could to impede the possibility of him ever going to university. The previous summer, his father had even gone as far as to tell the plant superintendent where he worked not to hire him for the summer because he was 'a wee lazy bastard'.

"Yee're sae smoot yee're stoopid, Ian!" his father went on, indirectly acknowledging Ian's above average intelligence, and giving his father another reason to be jealous of him. "Always usin beeg woords aroond me."

Ian said nothing.

"Oi've decided that this hoose is nay langer beeg enoof for baith of us. Gie oot!"

Ian was not surprised by his father's last statement. He knew that sooner or later his father would find an excuse to kick him out of the house as Thomas' father had with Thomas. As long as Ian had been prepared to allow his father to physically abuse him, he had been safe as far as being able to continue to go to school. But he was sixteen years old now and had 'stood up' to his father.

"Oi sayd gie the fook oot!" his father repeated.

Wordlessly, Ian got up, went into the kitchen, picked up his school books and put them into the old brown army knapsack in which he carried them. He had bought the used army knapsack in a war surplus store, but had told his friends that it was his father's from World War II. The truth was that his father had been too much of a coward to volunteer during the war and had instead pled an exemption to the draft on the necessity of staying home "to look after mee wee bairn" because he was a single parent. He had failed to tell the draft board that he was the reason for Ian having only one parent.

Going upstairs, Ian removed the pillowcase from the pillow on his bed, packed what few clothes he had into it, came downstairs, picked up his knapsack and left the house. His father remained where he was, a cigarette in one hand and a glass of whiskey in the other hand, staring at the television screen.

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"Hello grandfather," Ian said. His grandfather stood at the door to his farmhouse.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked gruffly.

"Father has kicked me out of the house and I need a place to stay while I finish high school. I'll work for nothing - just room and board."

In the week following leaving home, Ian had managed to get more part-time work stocking shelves at nights at the local supermarket where he had already been working on Saturdays while attending school. It hadn't been difficult to get more hours because he had always been honest and hardworking at whatever job he did, unlike his father who stole liquor from the local distillery in which he worked and was habitually absent due to hangovers. But if he was to finish his high-school education, Ian knew that he would also require a more inexpensive place to live than the boarding house in which he was staying.

Ian's grandfather's heart had softened toward him in the last sixteen years but he had been too proud to contact him. From time-to-time, George had gone as far as to surreptitiously watch Ian from a distance as he participated in school

outdoor activities -such as track meets. George still hated Thomas, but as the years had passed, he had grudgingly admitted to himself that Ian had not been responsible for the death of his only child; it had been that 'son-of-a-bitch', Thomas!

Moreover, as Ian grew older, his grandfather saw that he did not look at all like Thomas. Instead, Ian was now the spitting image of George's daughter, Mary. George had been completely devastated when she had died. He had lost her mother to diphtheria when Mary was just a child and then a few years later, Mary herself. It had taken sixteen years for the pain in his heart to begin to subside, although originally, he had vowed to never love anyone again for fear of losing them as he had his wife and his only child Mary.

"You can sleep in the barn in return for looking after the cattle," he said gruffly, turned and went into the house.

But that night he wrote a holographic will, making Ian the sole beneficiary. The following day, he had it notarized.



September 30, 1960

Ian's grandfather had allowed him to move into the house that summer and he still had his part-time, night-time job in the local supermarket. Although he no longer had time to pursue his athletic interests, Ian still got a lot of physical exercise from working on the farm. He had spent the summer helping his grandfather herd the cattle and with the haying. As a result of his outdoor activities he had become much more muscular, had acquired a beautiful tan, and stripped to his waist looked like a Greek god.

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"Ian, could I speak to you for a moment?" a familiar voice said from behind him.

Ian had just finished lunch alone. His jock friends were huddled at the far end of the cafeteria hitting on a bunch of cheerleaders. But he no longer had time to indulge in the social niceties of school life. He was too busy working while going to school and had to spend all of his spare time studying. Turning around to see who spoke to him, he was confronted by his science teacher, Miss Irwin. He almost shuddered visibly to see her face as close to his as it was, because she had to be one of the ugliest women that he had ever seen. The standing joke amongst the jocks of the school was that she 'had a face like a can of crushed worms' and it would have been difficult to describe it otherwise.

*Damn, what did I do wrong now?* he wondered. He had been enrolled in Miss Irwin's science classes since the beginning of the semester and wasn't doing very well. Between working long hours at night and fantasizing about her body during class, he had found it difficult to concentrate on her subjects.

"Yes ma'am," he responded politely.

"Ian, I'd like you to help me get some apparatus from the storeroom for our class after lunch."

"Yes ma'am," Ian repeated, blushing slightly and shifting his eyes to the floor in shy embarrassment.

Following Miss Irwin down the hall, Ian watched her hips sway provocatively as she walked. The first time that he had seen her at the front of the classroom, he had guessed her to be about thirty-five years old. But her body, with the exception of her face, had looked good. Tall and well-proportioned, she had a beautiful head of red hair -even if it was a little unkempt and might have been dyed. Her eyes were a beautiful green color, which made up a bit for her pock-marked face. Her lips were painted cherry-red, sensuously inviting and untouched by what appeared to be acne scars on the rest of her face. She wore a light-grey woman's business skirt and matching jacket with a white blouse. A red ascot was tied around her neck, probably to hide the wrinkles around her throat.

Entering the self-locking storage room ahead of Ian, Miss Irwin went to the corner of the room and pulled a step-stool over to the front of a cabinet on top of which sat some science apparatus.

"You'd better get the equipment, Ian" she said emphasizing the word 'you'. "It's too high for me to reach." Dutifully, Ian climbed up onto the step-stool, and

reached for the microscope to which she had pointed.

"Here, I'd better steady you so that you don't fall," she murmured as she reached out and placed both hands around Ian's thighs and her right hand over his penis.

Ian froze! But part of his body did not and took on a life of its own. He had been already partially aroused watching her walk down the hall.

"My, my, what do we have here?" she said. All Ian could do was groan.

"See me after school," she whispered, her voice filled with lust, turned and began to leave the storeroom. At the door, she stopped, turned and said "Oh, by the way, don't forget to bring the microscope," and continued out of the room.

Still in shock, Ian picked up the microscope and followed her out of the storeroom and down the hall, holding the microscope in front his groin. Outside her classroom, Miss Irwin stopped just long enough to get a drink of water from the drinking fountain, stepped into the room and addressed the class, as if nothing had happened. Ian followed her in.

That was Ian's first sexual encounter with Miss Irwin. But it was not his last. Almost every Sunday after that, he found an excuse to be away from the farm and meet her clandestinely wherever she wished to meet. At first, it was just for sex, during which she taught him everything that he would ever need to know about the subject. But after a while, Ian got to know Martha, for that was her first name, not just a sex partner but also as a person.

From what Martha told Ian about herself during their sexual encounters, she had once been very beautiful and engaged to a handsome, young successful lawyer, named Julian. Julian had great ambitions to become a politician. But unfortunately, one New Year's Eve, he and Martha had been in an automobile accident in which her face had gone through the windshield of the car and her face cut very badly with the broken shards of glass. Julian was driving at the time, had been drinking, and to avoid ruining his chances of becoming a future Senator, Martha had testified that she had been driving the vehicle. Julian had professed his undying love for her and promised to marry her in return for her lying for him in court. But after Martha's face had healed and Julian saw how disfigured she was, he had dropped her like a hot potato. After all, he had reasoned, *It wouldn't do for a Senator to be married to an ugly woman!*

Although her face had been badly disfigured, the rest of Martha's body had remained unblemished. As a result, countless men who rejected her because of her face, never learned of her beautiful body and passionate nature -that is, until out of sexual frustration she had seduced Ian. And as Ian began to spend more time with her, Martha even began to look attractive to him and although he had dated a few female students in the past, for the first time in his life he felt what he believed to be love for a woman.

But not only did Martha become Ian's lover, she also became his mentor. During the school day, it was business as usual. In class, she treated him as she did any other student. After school, each day, she was available to explain to him or any of her other students any concepts in physics or chemistry that they did not understand. Ian was one of the few students who took advantage of the opportunity, perhaps because of his love for her, and as a result became the best student in her subjects.

Ian wasn't able to be with Martha sexually much that winter or the following spring, other than the occasional time that they were able to sneak into his grandfather's barn and make love in the hayloft where they would make a nest in the hay and cover themselves with a warm blanket. But when summer came in 1961, every Sunday Ian would take his fishing rod and ride his bicycle to the outskirts of the town, and wait at the little bridge over the river at the foot of the escarpment and pretend to fish. Martha would arrive a few minutes later in her car. After looking around to ensure that no one saw them, Ian would hide his bicycle and fishing pole in the nearby bushes, climb into the backseat of Martha's car and hide under a blanket until she had driven down an old logging road to a spot not too far from his secret sanctuary\*.

[ \* It had been at age ten, while poring over some old town newspapers in the basement of the local library which he frequented to escape the beatings of his father, that Ian had found reference to the location of an old Indian place of worship called 'Wabagowna' by the Indians who had inhabited the area before being exterminated by the white man. He had vowed that he would find this sacred place and make it his personal sanctuary. Following the description of its location in the newspaper, he had searched diligently until he found it and when the library burned down a few years later, the knowledge of its location had burned with it. Ian had jealously guarded his secret and went there often during his youth to escape the physical abuse of his alcoholic father.]

There they would get out of the car, take their well-used blanket, a picnic basket and one of Martha's favorite books of poetry and find their way through the woods to the top of the escarpment where Wabagowna stood. Once there, Martha would lay the blanket on the ground, and in the really warm weather, would take off her clothes to sunbathe and beckon Ian to do so also. Together they would lie in each other's arms and when not making love, Ian would lie on his back with his arms behind his head, close his eyes and listen to the drone of the insects while Martha read poetry to him. Sometimes during the rest of the week if she found herself sexually aroused late at night, which was often, Martha would park her automobile just down the road from Ian's grandfather's farm and wait for Ian to come home from night-work at the supermarket. Together they would creep into the nearby hayfield to make love. It had been there in the hayfield, huddled under their blanket beneath the star-filled sky that Martha had also introduced Ian to his love of astronomy.

June 29, 1962

In June 1962 Ian graduated from Bay's End High School. He had managed to carry on his clandestine love affair with Martha undetected during the previous two years, and had excelled in all of his science subjects, thanks to her. But it was Graduation Day now and it would only be a matter of time before he would be off to university and would no longer be able to see her as often as he wished. But Martha had sworn of her undying love for him and reassured him that somehow, they would continue to see each other.

Ian had been voted class valedictorian by his classmates in spite of the fact that he had opted out of all school sports because of his part-time job and he now stood on the stage in front of his fellow-students and their parents. The staff of the school sat behind him. Martha was sitting directly behind him with a pleased look on her face. It had been she who had helped him write his speech and had introduced him as valedictorian.

Ian began his address:

"Ladies and gentlemen, honored guests, teachers, and graduating students. Welcome to our high school's annual graduation ceremony." He paused and then continued, "To begin with, I wish to thank the graduating class for the honor of speaking to you on their behalf on the occasion of their graduation."

Thinking of his own father, he swallowed his pride and continued. "And on their behalf, I wish to thank our parents for giving us the opportunity to complete high school. We, the graduating class wish to reassure you that we are aware of the major responsibility that you undertook to have children and the personal sacrifices that you made in order to raise us. We also know that there have been many times in our young lives that we probably caused you some anxiety about the ways in which we have behaved. But we wish to reassure you that we have probably behaved no worse than you did when you were teenagers." Some parents in the audience laughed in agreement. But a few were silent, thinking of their own misspent youth. "However, we do pledge to you that we will try to be as good a parent to our own children as you have been to us." All the parents in the audience beamed with pride and applauded in appreciation, except one.

Ian reddened a little, thinking of Martha, and continued. "Also, on behalf of the graduating class, I wish to thank our teachers for the tremendous effort that they have made in assisting us to achieve success in our school studies. Without their personal interest in each of us, we would not have made it." He could feel Martha's eyes behind him caressing his body in anticipation of their being together that night after graduation.

"I also wish to congratulate the graduating class on successfully completing their high-school education and it is customary at this point in a graduation program for the valedictorian to speak to them about their future. But before doing so, I want to say something to the students in our classes who were not fortunate enough to graduate with us. What I want to say to you is that it's okay to fail!"

The audience gasped audibly with surprise. The purpose of a graduation ceremony was to honor winners not losers! But the students who had failed their

final year, but had come to see their friends graduate and were slouching in their seats in an attempt not to be too noticeable, sat upright and began to pay attention.

“Yes, you all heard me correctly,” Ian said, turning his head toward the faculty on the stage. “It’s okay to fail!” Martha nodded her head in agreement. “Why is it okay to fail?” he asked rhetorically. “It’s okay to fail because as the famous American inventor Thomas Edison once said ‘Show me a man who has never failed and I will show you a man who has never tried’\*”

[ \*Quoted from the book ‘The Life of Edison’ that Ian kept on the nightstand beside his bed and referred to often during his high school years.]

“Now some of you might say, ‘It was easy for Edison to say that because he was a genius’ and you may be right. After all, by the end of his life, Edison held patents for almost eleven hundred devices -including the light bulb. But as Edison himself said ‘Genius is one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration!’ [*Ibid.*] And when confronted with any of his experiments that didn’t work, his reaction was always, ‘I have not failed. I’ve just found ten thousand ways that won’t work.’” [*Ibid.*] By now, Ian’s audience was beginning to warm up to what he was saying as evidenced by their murmur of approval, for many of them saw themselves as ‘self-made men’ also.

“So, it’s okay to fail as long as you keep trying,” Ian stated. ‘Trying to be what?’ you might ask. ‘I’ll never be another Thomas Edison,’ you might add. Well, neither will I! Neither will I!”

“Oh yes, you will! Oh yes, you will!” one of Ian’s robed classmates yelled in admiration from amongst the graduates sitting at the front of the auditorium. The audience roared with laughter.

Taken slightly by surprise, Ian paused for a moment and then said, for he knew which of his friends had shouted that remark. “Thank you for that kind remark Fred, but none of us in the graduating class tonight can predict with certainty our own future. All that can be hoped for is that each of us will try to be the best that we can become. And what do I mean by ‘trying to be the best that we can become’, Fred?” he said, using Fred to personalize his speech.

“Well, we all know that contrary to the preamble of the Declaration of Independence, all human beings are not created equal,” Ian continued, emphasizing the word ‘not’. There was a murmur of protest against his attack on the audience’s beloved Declaration, but Ian held up his hand to silence them. “No, it’s true. Not all human beings are created equal. Some of us are born into poverty, some of us are born into wealth; some of us have good parents and some of us have bad parents; some of us are born male and some of us are born female – not that that one’s sex should matter, but it does! And unfortunately, some of us are born with more innate intelligence than others.

[ \* Ian made no reference to discrimination against religious and racial minorities here in his speech because no negro people lived in the town and the Catholic minority living there had integrated nicely into the WASP community, although ‘mixed marriages’ were still frowned upon.]

“The result of all these variables is that not all of us are destined to become rocket scientists or brain surgeons. Some of us are destined to become garbage collectors or parking lot attendants. But what is wrong with just being a garbage collector or parking lot attendant?” he demanded to know, emphasizing the word ‘just’. “Nothing!” he exclaimed. “For, as Thomas Edison also said in spite of his superior intellect, ‘I have friends in overalls whose friendship I would not swap for the favor of the kings of the world.’ [ibid.] For as Edison also knew, it is not education, wealth, occupation, gender or even race that defines the worth of a human being, but his or her character - and that is something that each of us do have control over! So, what I mean when I say that each of us should try to be the best that we can be, is that each of us should not only try to be the best rocket scientist, best garbage collector or best member of whatever other career we choose, but also the most compassionate human being that we can be towards others less fortunate than ourselves. Therefore, I think that the best advice that I can give to not only the graduating students but everyone here tonight is to:

*“Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant, they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons - they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let not this blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams; it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.” \**

[\*Desiderata. Copyrighted by Max Ehrmann in 1927. Its real origin is uncertain, but it became very popular in the early 1960's]

Ian had no sooner finished reading the poem ‘Desiderata’ when a familiar drunken voice shouted out from the back of the auditorium. "Boolsheet!"

It was his father! Ian would have recognized that voice anywhere. He had



not informed his father of the date of his graduation ceremony, had not expected him to be there and had not noticed his presence in the audience. Everyone in the auditorium froze. No one knew what to do. This was the first time that anything like this had happened during a Commencement ceremony.

"Shhh..." said the woman sitting next to Ian's father.

"Yee fookin' 'shhh'. Oi'm that wee bastard up there's fither and oi geet to sey whativver I weel about him," Ian's father slurred. No longer able to physically and verbally abuse Ian at home, he had decided to embarrass him publicly.

Ian had never been so humiliated in his life! He had never told anyone, including Martha, of he and his father's dirty little secret for fear that they would think less of him. His face went white with rage. Turning to the people on stage, he said. "Please excuse me for a moment," left the stage and began walking down the aisle towards his father, his fists clenched. It was his intention to beat his father to death with his bare hands!

Not having anticipated that this might be one of Ian's reactions to his outburst, his father suddenly realized the precariousness of his situation, leapt from his seat with surprising alacrity for a drunk, and scuttled out of the auditorium with a fearful look behind him.

Waiting until he was sure that his father had left the auditorium, Ian returned to the stage and continued, "As I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted..." and finished his speech. When he was finished, he walked off the stage to a standing ovation, out of the auditorium and out of the lives of the people of Bay's End, including Martha's forever.

September 3, 1962

It was in September of 1962 that Marina became part of Ian's life. He had left Bay's End immediately upon graduation without saying goodbye to any one, with the exception of his grandfather. He had already saved enough money for his first semester at Lakefield University and arrived early enough on campus to get a part-time job with the same grocery store chain that he had worked for in Bay's End. This job, together with the scholarship that Martha had been instrumental in getting for him would see him through his first year of university.

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Lolling back in his seat at the back of the filling lecture theatre, Ian watched the good-looking, young women enter the room. It would be the first Philosophy course that he had ever taken. He had intended to enroll in 'The History of Technology' as the liberal arts option part of his first-year science program, but when unable to fit it into his timetable he had settled for an introductory philosophy course instead. *Maybe taking this course was not such a bad idea after all*, he mused, as he made mental notes of some of the female students who he might consider getting to know in the Biblical sense of the word. His affair with Martha had definitely stimulated his interest in the opposite sex.

The lecturer entered the room. "Good morning class," the matronly woman said, as she placed her lecture folder on the podium on the stage at the front of the lecture theatre. "My name is Professor Kahn. I will be your lecturer for the duration of this course," she said as she perched her gold-rimmed glasses on the tip of her nose, peered over them and began organizing the notes for her lecture.

Ian took the opportunity to assess her. From where he sat, Professor Kahn looked acceptable enough to be a woman professor. She appeared to be about sixty years old and would have been diplomatically referred to as 'pleasingly plump' by her friends. Her grey hair was tied back in a bun and surrounded a pleasant looking, but full face. She wore no lipstick, or if she did it wasn't noticeable. There were no rings on her fingers which implied that she was not married or engaged. The only jewelry that she wore was a gold heart-shaped locket around her neck above the top of the simple grey dress that she wore. The rest of her body was hidden by the podium.

Clearing her voice, Professor Kahn began. "For the sake of those of you who may be in the wrong room, the title of this course is Philosophy 101." Two students looked at each other, flushed with embarrassment, silently picked up their books and slunk out of the room. Ian could hear the girl hiss angrily at the boy as they passed him, "I told you that we were in the wrong room."

*Well, no nookie for him tonight*, Ian thought, and refocused his attention on the professor at the front of the room. She pretended not to see the two errant students leave, but her blue eyes twinkled and her lips smiled in expressive amusement. It was obvious that she too had heard the girl's remark and may have even arrived at the same conclusion as had Ian. Ian thought, *If she's an old maid she doesn't seem to be particularly uptight about it.*

Taking a sip of water from a glass on the podium in front her, Professor Kahn

continued. "Philosophy 101 is an introductory course in Philosophy for those students who have not taken any philosophy courses before -and for those of you who may never take one again. The purpose of this course is to introduce you to some concepts that are dealt with in the study of Philosophy and to provide you with an historical overview of them.

"Unfortunately, most of the content of this course is limited to a history of Western Philosophy, which is to say, primarily a study of Greek, Roman and European philosophers. I say 'unfortunately', because while there have been a number of other major civilizations, such as China and India that have had their own famous philosophers such as Lao Tzu and Buddha, we only have time in this course to cover philosophers who have influenced the development of our own western civilization. Those of you who decide to take further courses in philosophy will be given an opportunity at that time to specialize in the study of specific philosophers, including Eastern ones.

"During this course, you will be expected to attend classes regularly, as well as read biographies of different philosophers we are studying, write essays explaining their ideas, as well as pass two written examinations. The details of the course of study are on the desk at the front of the room," she said, pointing to a stack of stapled papers on the desk beside her. "You can pick up a copy at the end of class.

"Now let's get started. To begin with, does anyone here know the definition of the word 'philosophy'?" A plain-looking girl with horn-rimmed glasses, buck-teeth and long braids sitting in the front row shot up her hand.

"Yes?" Ms. Kahn said, pointing to her. Standing up and facing the rest of the students the girl simpered "Philosophy is the love of wisdom -from the Greek words 'philos' meaning 'loving' and 'sophos' meaning 'wise'".

*What a browner!* Ian thought, and continued to peruse the better-looking female students in the class.

"That's correct," Professor Kahn praised. The girl beamed and looked around the room for further approval, only to be greeted with either blank stares from those who knew nothing of philosophy or with looks of envy by those who did but were too timid to be the first to respond to the question.

"Would you care to elaborate a little more on your answer?" Ms. Kahn continued, giving the girl an opportunity to share her knowledge of the subject with other students in the class.

The girl's face reddened. She had exhausted her knowledge on the subject! "Uh... no." she responded.

"Well, of course your definition is correct." Professor Kahn replied, sensing the girl's embarrassment. "But I think that perhaps I should explain to the class what Philosophy is in a little more detail," she said, getting the girl off the hook. "There are many different definitions for the discipline called Philosophy," she continued. "The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines Philosophy as, quote 'seeking after wisdom or knowledge, especially that which deals with ultimate reality, or with the most general causes or principals of things and ideas and human perception and knowledge of them, physical phenomena (natural philosophy) and ethics (moral philosophy)', unquote. Reducing this definition to its' simplest terms using one tool of Philosophy, that is,

‘reductionism’, I personally choose to define the study of Philosophy as quote, ‘seeking after knowledge concerning matters of existence,’ unquote. I leave it to you to find the meaning of the philosophical term ‘reductionism’ and using it, verify, in writing, the validity of my definition, compared to the dictionary definition, by class time Wednesday.

“Now, while the word ‘philosophy’ literally means the ‘love of wisdom’, as your fellow-student has explained to you the subject discipline that we know today as ‘Philosophy’ did not exist until the Greeks created the word because as every other discipline such as Science and Religion, the study of Philosophy evolved over a long period of time.” Upon hearing the word ‘science’, Ian sat upright, leaned forward and began to listen with attention.

“Twenty-five thousand years ago, there was no science and there was no philosophy. There was only ‘religion’. I say there was only religion because ‘religion’ is defined as, quote, ‘a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies’, unquote, which describes very well in what our prehistoric ancestors believed. These first beliefs were very simple. For each natural force, such as the wind and rain, our prehistoric ancestors reasoned that there must be behind each event, an individual cause which was more powerful than they and therefore there must be some kind of ‘god’ causing each natural force. The physical laws of the universe did exist of course, but were as yet undiscovered and it was believed that these unknown laws of nature were subject to the whim of the gods. We could go on to speculate what some of these ancient religions would have been like, but this course is not a course in Anthropology or Comparative Religion and those of you who wish to pursue these subjects should consult George Peter Murdock’s book ‘Our Primitive Contemporaries’.

“Now, while it is true that our prehistoric ancestors did develop tools with which to assist them to control their environment, for example, the spear and the throwing stick, they made no attempt to understand the laws of physics behind each of these inventions. If the tool worked for what it was intended, ‘Great!’ and it remained unmodified. If the tool did not work as well as it should then it was modified on ‘a trial and error’ basis until it did work satisfactorily.

“Nor did our hunting and gathering ancestors sit around in the evenings discussing such philosophical topics as the ‘nature of reality’. They were too busy trying to just stay alive to spend much time thinking about such abstract ideas. It is true that they were aware of such things as life and death as evidenced by the fact that they buried their dead with personal belongings, but there is no evidence that this was anything other than a very simple understanding of the nature of their existence. Also, because philosophy deals with more abstract ideas than just the development of technology, the development of philosophical discussion as an activity required a relatively large group of well-organized and united people with a reasonable amount of wealth and leisure time to allow some individuals within that society the luxury of sitting around contemplating their navels.”

A few of the female students giggled at the mention of the word ‘navel’. Ms. Kahn frowned disapprovingly at their immaturity, and continued.

“Having said that, then one would think that it would have been early

Egyptian civilization that would have been the first to develop the study of Philosophy as a discipline because Egypt was the first great nation to arise in the Mediterranean area with a strong stable economic system. In addition, Egypt was a large, well-organized society with an enormous amount of wealth and leisure time for the ruling class. But the Egyptian economy was an agriculturally based, monolithic, and autocratic political system ruled by a pharaoh who not only had absolute power, but was believed to be a god himself.

“So instead, it was the Greeks, three thousand years later who began to develop Philosophy as a recognized discipline. ‘Why Greece?’ you might ask. The reason is because ancient Greece consisted of small independent city-states whose economies were based primarily on trade. Because these city-states were relatively small, they were more adaptable to change through the process of democratic participation from within. Because their economies were based primarily on trade, they had access to new ideas from the world outside their own society. The fact that some of these city-states also had a wealthy class provided an ideal environment for leisure time for the discussions and contemplation of more esoteric topics that included the question ‘Why?’ as well as of just ‘What?’ and ‘How?’ One of the assignments for this class will be to read C. E. Robinson’s ‘Everyday Life in Ancient Greece’ and compare and contrast its content to James Breasted’s book ‘Daily Life in Ancient Egypt’ to contrast the difference between these two societies.”

A student’s hand shot up.

“Yes?”

“What about we Jews? Doesn’t our four thousand years of civilization count for anything?” the male student asked belligerently.

“It sure does!” Ms. Kahn reassured him. “But the Jewish civilization’s greatest contribution to the world was the idea of monotheism and the roots of Christianity, not to science or philosophy. And what a great contribution it was!” The student beamed with pride and sat down, mollified.

Ms. Kahn continued. “Of course, most Greeks still believed in their gods and goddesses. And even though some of the more educated Greeks did not believe in those kinds of gods, early Greek scientific knowledge was still based more on induction or intuitive generalization than on deduction as a result of specific observations. While some Greek philosophers, such as Democritus who lived between 460 and 370 BCE, made some lucky guesses as to the nature of their world using the method of deduction, others, such as Aristotle who lived at about the same time, did not. For example, by chopping up an object smaller and smaller, Democritus reasoned deductively that all objects were composed of smaller indivisible pieces of the same material which he called ‘atoms’. Aristotle, on the other hand, reasoned intuitively that when two objects, one heavier than the other, were dropped from the same height, the heavier object would hit the ground first, but did not try it to find out by performing the experiment. The conclusions of both of these men seemed to be ‘logical’ but neither of them verified their theories scientifically. Democritus could not, even if he had wanted to, because he lacked the twentieth-century tools with which to do so and Aristotle did not, because he believed as stated in his ‘Posterior Analytics’, quote ‘except intuition, nothing can be truer than scientific

knowledge' unquote. It took the invention of the electron microscope in the twentieth century to prove Democritus right and an experiment by Galileo in 1589 CE to prove Aristotle wrong.

“Ironically, although it is Aristotle who is credited with devising methods for trying to arrive at reliable knowledge based on observation, it required Roger Bacon who lived in England somewhere between 1214 and 1294 CE to suggest the process of observation, hypothesis, experimentation, verification and conclusion as a valid scientific method of ascertaining the laws of the universe. As an aside, it still boggles my mind to think that Aristotle did not bother to test his theory of falling objects by simply dropping two objects of different weights from the same height to see if the heavier one did strike the ground before the lighter one!”

The good-looking blond girl sitting beside Ian looked slightly puzzled and glanced at him as if to ask ‘Well, doesn’t it?’ He caressed the girl’s breasts with his eyes, leaned over and whispered to her, “I’ll explain it to you later.”

“What then are the differences between a scientist and a philosopher – especially modern-day scientists and philosophers,’ you might ask,” Ms. Kahn continued. “Well, to begin with, scientists assume that there exist immutable laws of physics which explain our universe. They believe that it only requires using our senses, and the scientific method to discover them. But a philosopher, while acknowledging the existence of scientific laws, also attempts to formulate general propositions about the ultimate nature of reality, using logic as well as observation. For example, a scientist might ask ‘How large is space’; a philosopher would ask ‘Why does space exist?’ A scientist is interested in discovering the laws of nature. A philosopher examines the process by which so-called reality become known to us -that is to say the origins, nature and limits of knowledge itself. This branch of philosophy is called ‘epistemology’. A scientist may be able to explain how something happens, but the philosopher wishes also to know why it happens. And as long as a philosopher defines his or her thesis correctly, analyses its implications logically so that there are no self-contradictions such that his or her conclusions are consistent with experience and other ideas that occur as a result of thinking, then his or her thesis is considered to be at least logically correct.

“You notice that I used the phrase ‘consistent with experience’ and did not say ‘consistent with the scientific method’ when speaking of the philosophical process. I deliberately used the word ‘experience’ as well as the phrase, quote ‘and other ideas that occur as a result of thinking’ unquote, when speaking of the philosophical process because while a good philosophical theory should be in agreement with our senses to the extent that we can depend upon them, it may be that human beings have other ways of acquiring knowledge than just from our five senses. In fact, we may be able to extrapolate one level of understanding to another level of understanding through the use of ideas and thought alone. This field of philosophy is called ‘teleology’.

“And just as in the study of Science, the study of Philosophy can be divided into a number of other different branches depending upon which area of ideas an investigator wishes to explore. One area of philosophical ideas that an individual might wish to explore is called ‘Metaphysics’. The word



'metaphysics' is derived from the Greek words 'meta', meaning 'beyond' and 'physika' meaning physical. The study of metaphysics is concerned with trying to explain the fundamental nature of our existence and not just discovering the physical relationship of matter itself -i.e. the so-called 'laws of nature'.

"Traditional subdivisions of Metaphysics are 'Ontology' and 'Cosmology'. Ontology is the study of what type of things exist in the world and what their relationships are to one another. Cosmology refers to the discussion of not only the study of the universe, but man's place in it. Strictly speaking, the word 'Cosmogony' refers to the study of the origins of the Universe only." At the sound of the word 'Cosmology', Ian leaned forward and began to listen even more attentively.

"Another branch of Philosophy is called 'Epistemology' and is concerned with the nature of 'knowledge' and whether what we know is 'true' - and if it is, then what is 'truth'?

"A third branch of Philosophy is the study of moral philosophy or 'Ethics'. I think that you all know intuitively what the word 'ethics' means. But the study of 'moral philosophy' goes beyond just asking oneself, 'How ought I conduct myself in my relationship with other human beings?' but also asks whether or not there are absolute, universal ethical 'truths' which all human beings should follow.

"Political Philosophy', a fourth branch of Philosophy, is similar to 'Ethics' but deals with the study of the relationship of individuals with their government. It includes questions about such things as the role of the state, justice, the common good and the rights of citizens.

" 'Aesthetics' is that branch of Philosophy that deals with questions such as 'What is beauty?'

"Logic', another branch of Philosophy, deals with the study of valid argument forms, which I will explain in detail later in the course because logic is used to a great extent in dealing with every other branch of Philosophy.

"The 'Philosophy of Language' deals with the nature, origin and use of language. I include the study of Semiotics which is the study of signs and symbols as a means of communication, as part of this branch.

"Probably the most controversial branch of Philosophy is the 'Philosophy of Religion' which asks such questions as, 'Does God Exist'? and if so, 'What is Its nature?'

"But my favorite branch of Philosophy is the 'Philosophy of Mind' which deals with trying to understand the nature of the mind and its' relationship to the body. I wish to emphasize here that the philosophy of the mind deals with the nature of the mind and its' relationship to the body and not the nature of the relationship between the brain and the body because there is a major difference between the brain and the mind. The human brain is just a physical organ of the body that houses the mind. But what is the 'mind'? Hmmm....No matter, never mind!" Ian was the only student in the room to get the pun and laughed aloud, only to be greeted with blank stares from the rest of the students but an appreciative smile from Miss Kahn.

"Why study philosophy?" you might ask. One good reason for studying philosophy is to teach oneself to think critically and logically. In order to coexist

with other humans, it is important to investigate the validity of their ideas whether in politics, religion, or science, because the more we know about such things, the more likely we will be able to understand other peoples' points of view and be able to coexist with them peacefully. And the more critical of information and logical you are, the more correct you are likely to be in your conclusions.

“One of the reasons for studying the ideas of individual philosophers is to try to find and extract from their writings any words of wisdom that might be useful in the synthesis of our own personal philosophy with which to guide our life. In our next class, we will begin our study of different philosophers and their influence on European and subsequently American civilization. It will become apparent as we study them that they cannot all have been correct. In fact, they may all have been wrong, because a philosopher, and consequently his or her philosophy can be influenced by the political, social, economic and scientific environment in which they find themselves! For example, ‘Was the German philosopher Nietzsche influenced by the German mentality of his times or was the German mentality under the Nazis influenced by Nietzsche’s philosophy?’”

“But as amateur philosophers, it will not be your job to determine which of these philosophers was correct. It will be your job in studying them to assess the degree to which each of them was logical, consistent and conformed to the philosophical method. Well that’s all for today. Class dismissed. See you all Wednesday.”

All the students in the lecture theatre arose to leave. Standing up to allow the beautiful young blond girl beside him to exit the row in which they were both sitting, Ian said to her, “Now about Aristotle’s idea concerning falling objects...”

January 7, 1963

Ian was half-way through his First-Year philosophy course and his class had just completed their first examination a few days before.

"Class dismissed," Professor Kahn said.

Ian who now always sat in the front row of the lecture hall got up to leave.

"Not you, Ian, I'd like to speak to you for a moment." Waiting for the rest of the class to leave Ms. Kahn said. "Ian, please meet me in my office after your last class today."

*Oh! Oh! Here it comes,* Ian realized, as he left the room. He had not studied for the mid-term examination and was convinced that he had failed. Probably not by much, and he had done extremely well in his science subjects. But the condition of his scholarship was that he pass all subjects each semester and he wasn't looking forward to having to leave university because of a lack of funds. *Well, it was my own fault,* he muttered to himself as he trudged his way to Professor Kahn's office after his last class.

Rapping at her office door, he hoped that Professor Kahn would not be there and his heart sank when he heard her voice say. "Come in." She was sitting behind her desk, with a folder open in front of her.

"Thank you for coming, Ian. Please sit down," Professor Kahn said, fingering the locket around her neck. Ian reluctantly eased his six-foot, two-hundred-pound frame, into the chair in front of her.

"Ian," professor Kahn said wearily. "I'll get right to the point. I was really disappointed in the results of your examination. Are there any circumstances under which I should reconsider my mark?"

"No." Ian said, dropping his head in embarrassed shame. How could he tell her that the reason that he had flunked her examination was because during study week he had gone home to visit his ailing grandfather, bumped into his drunken father on the main street, got into a knock-down, drag-out fight with him and spent the rest of the week in jail! He had not been able to study one iota for her examination. As a result, he had answered the first two essay questions on the examination reasonably well, the third essay question with some difficulty and out of desperation he had answered the last question on her examination with the statement 'Only God knows the answer to that question.' To which professor Kahn had replied by writing, in red, under his answer, 'God gets 100%. You get zero!'

"Well," Professor Kahn went on, "I've talked to your other professors and they tell me that you have done extremely well in your science subjects, and I must admit what answers you gave on my examination were, for the most part, well-organized, logical, and analytical. And I was particularly impressed with your suggestion that one way to discover the 'nature of God, if He exists', would be to reverse-engineer the universe. As a matter of fact, I would like to discuss that idea with you sometime. I was equally impressed with your term work and it is not often that first year Philosophy students show such insight into its discipline. As a result, I've decided to give you a pass in my subject this semester providing you make up for it next semester. Please don't disappoint me."

"Thank you, Miss Kahn," Ian said gratefully, with a sigh of relief. "I won't

let you down.”

“I know you won't Ian. You can go now.”

After Ian had gone, Professor Kahn leaned back in her chair, arched her fingers together, thought for a moment, checked Ian's folder that lay before her, picked up the telephone and made a long-distance phone call.

\* \* \*

By the end of the semester, Ian had not only made up for his previous low mark, but had aced the final exam. He made an appointment to see Professor Kahn. As he entered her office, she rose from behind her desk and held out her hand.

"Well Ian," she said a little sadly, "I guess this is goodbye. You not only managed to pass my course on your own, but did extremely well. But I suppose you came back to tell me that you won't be taking any more philosophy courses."

"Heck, no!" Ian grinned. "I came back to ask you if I could enroll in another one of your classes next semester!" This time, it was Professor Kahn who sighed with relief.

January 7, 1963 – May 1963

The rest of Ian's first year at university was typical of some first-year students. During the first semester, he had lived off campus but at the beginning of the second semester moved onto campus in order to participate more fully in campus life by getting to know other male students and have more access to female students. He participated in the usual college pranks such as assisting his dorm buddies reassemble a Volkswagen 'beetle' automobile in the women's gymnasium late one night. In retaliation, his dorm was pranked when a female chemistry student mixed a solution of phenolphthalein into his dorm's communal coffee-pot that turned everybody's urine red after drinking from it. For a while, some of the guys thought that they were bleeding to death from some fatal STD.

Ian also took the opportunity to meet a number of co-eds. He introduced himself to Betty in the library and arranged a date, met Ruth at a football game, picked up Liz at a basketball game, seduced June (or was it Shirley?) after a dance and began dating Carole on a regular basis after meeting her at a sorority party. He met his professor, Miss Kahn, in the college Arbor Room as much as she seemed to want to, and although they only discussed the ideas of some of the philosophers that he was studying in her class that semester, he made no attempt to dispel the rumor that he was having sex with her – his rationale being that he would be more sexually successful with the co-eds he was dating if they thought that he was also having sex with a female professor.

Of course, like a lot of other young college men, Ian also experimented with drugs in an attempt to discover 'ultimate reality'. His initial experimentation with LSD was harmless enough and it certainly did enhance the vividness of the colors of the objects that he saw around him when under the influence of the drug. But he ended his experimentation abruptly when one of his dorm-mates while under the influence of the same drug, thought that he could fly and threw himself out of his dorm window. Luckily, the student lived on the first floor of the building. Ian lived on the eighth! As a result, he settled for smoking the odd joint of marijuana in an attempt to enhance his perception of reality.

As well, Ian explored the subject of hypnosis because 'hypnotic regression'\* was also all the rage at the time.

[ \*In 1952, a woman by the name of Virginia Tighe had been hypnotized and under hypnosis claimed to have lived a past life in 19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland as a woman named Bridey Murphy. A book entitled 'The Search for Bridey Murphy' was published in 1956 which seemed to support that contention. The book had become very popular and in spite of it having been debunked, experimenting with 'hypnotic regression' was still quite popular on College campuses in the '60's.]

Although Ian did not personally participate in any of the 'hypnotic regression' experiments with which his dorm-mates experimented, he did have the resident amateur hypnotist teach him how to hypnotize himself so that he might be able to communicate with that part of the brain in which mystical experiences take place. But the only success that he had with that experiment was when, one night after he had gone to bed and self-hypnotized himself, he attempted to see 'God', as had Moses. And did so, but discovered that God had

the face of a sinister-looking rat! When asked by Ian, why He was so ugly, God had replied, 'I didn't say that I was good-looking!' After that, Ian restricted his use of self-hypnosis, at least for the time-being, to assist himself in falling asleep when he was too stressed to fall asleep otherwise.



September 1963 - September 1964

After almost failing Miss Kahn's philosophy course the previous year and enrolling in her second-year philosophy class, Ian continued to find every excuse to be with her and she found every excuse to allow him to do so. They met often, usually to discuss philosophy but she often guided their discussions to other topics as well. All of Ian's male friends continued to tease him about having sex with her and when he denied it vehemently they responded with 'Oh sure!' and winked knowingly.

One day, while they were having coffee together in the Arbor Room and after having discussed the tragedy of President Kennedy's recent assassination, Marina said to Ian (they were now on a first name basis), "Ian, I'd like you to go south with me." At first, he wasn't sure what she meant until she explained to him that she had recently attended a civil rights rally in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963 at which Martin Luther King Jr., had spoken\*; that she was a member of the American Civil Liberties Union, had been involved in the effort to fight racial discrimination against American negroes for some time and wanted Ian to accompany her to Mississippi where they and others would be involved in voter registration activities the following summer.

[ \* During his speech, denouncing racial discrimination, King had exhorted his listeners to 'go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.']

"It's not right the way that negroes\* are still being treated in the South," Marina had said.

[ \*The term 'negro' was still being used to refer to Americans of African descent in the United States in the 1960's and 1970's. It was Jesse Jackson who popularized the term 'African-American' in the 1980's and it was Stokely Carmichael, leader of the Black Panthers, who popularized the term 'Black' during the same period. The word 'negro' is Spanish and Portuguese in origin and is derived from the Latin root 'niger' meaning 'black'. When slaves from Africa were imported into the American south, they became referred to as 'nigras' (because of local dialects) and thence the pejorative word 'nigger'. The word 'negro' instead of the word 'black' is used throughout the novel to reflect the vocabulary of the times.]

Ian knew that there was still subtle racism in many of the northern cities of the United States but admitted his ignorance about the ways in which negroes were being treated in the South. Marina explained patiently to him how, although most of the 'Jim Crow Laws'\* that had been enacted by the southern states after the Civil War had been nullified by the United States Supreme Court by 1954, the same state legislatures and municipalities still conspired to limit the rights of negroes in other ways.

[ \*After the Civil War and in spite of the United States Constitution, most southern states governments enacted legislation creating 'de jure' segregation between negroes and whites. Examples of some of these laws were the segregation of public schools, hospitals, public transportation, hotels, restrooms, restaurants,

drinking fountains and even the military. These laws were referred to collectively as 'Jim Crow Laws'.]

"Did you know, for example, Ian, that in some southern states such as Mississippi, negroes make up almost one-half of the adult population, but only about six percent of them are registered as voters?"

"No, I didn't know that. Why don't they register?"

"Well, for a number of reasons. To begin with, all the southern states have a 'poll-tax' which is a fee that voters must pay before they can vote. Although this fee applies to both whites and negroes, it is disproportionately hard on negroes because the majority of them are poor. You must also own land worth a certain amount which is another stumbling block placed in the way of negroes because very few of them own their own land. Literacy tests also require that voters demonstrate a certain level of education before a person can vote. Not only are the questions they ask on these literacy tests unrealistic\* but the tests are administered by whites who nearly always rule that the negro who took the test failed it."

[ \*One question on the literacy test might read 'Name the rights a person has after he has been indicted by a grand jury.']

"What about poor and illiterate white people. Don't they complain of being disenfranchised also?"

"Well, the way that southern states got around that objection was to pass legislation that allows individuals to vote if their father or grandfather was registered to vote prior to 1867. This law ensures that poor and illiterate whites, but not negroes, can vote because voting in the South prior to 1867 was almost completely by whites."

"Wow! They really thought of everything when it came to preventing negroes from sharing in government didn't they?"

"Oh, that's not all. If a negro does manage to get on the voter's list, some election procedures are intentionally made so complex that some negro voter ballots are nullified for not following the procedures correctly, the reason being that voter officials do not inform negro voters of the correct procedures ahead of time. Even a lot of negroes who pass all the hurdles that I've mentioned don't bother to vote because there are no negro candidates to vote for anyway, because the Democratic Party which controls the southern legislatures prohibit negroes from voting in their primaries. And finally, when all else fails, they do what the Nazis did in Germany -control negro dissenters by intimidation and violence through the Ku Klux Klan."

"What's the solution?"

"Voter registration. It's only by sharing in their destiny through a role in government can negroes hope to integrate into American society and participate fully in the so-called 'American Dream'\*. "

[ \*Although it is true that collectively it was white southerners who were the overwhelming source of discrimination of negro Americans, there were many southern whites who were non-racist and opposed to racial discrimination. But as in Nazi Germany, most of these people were cowed into silence.]

Having listened to Marina's arguments, Ian had no moral choice but to agree to go south with her. Immediately, she began, with his assistance, to help the local campus chapter of SNCC\* recruit students for participation in a 'Mississippi Summer Project' being organized by the Council of Federated Organizations\*\*.

[ \*Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee]

[ \*\*COFO consisted of a coalition of the Mississippi branches of the four major civil rights organizations (SNCC, CORE, NAACP and SCLC.)]

The main goal of COFO's activities would be to assist negroes in Mississippi to register as voters, teach literacy in 'Freedom Schools' and promote membership in the recently formed negro 'Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party' to challenge negro exclusion from the all-white Democratic delegation at the next summer's Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The reasons given for the Council of Federated Organizations concentrating on Mississippi was because Mississippi had the lowest percentage of negroes in the country registered to vote and it was felt that if there could be a breakthrough in voter discrimination in Mississippi then the rest of the southern states would follow suit.

In June of 1964, Marina and Ian's small band of followers from Lakefield University arrived at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio where their two-week orientation along with volunteers from other universities across the United States took place. Their names were taken and rooms assigned to each of them for the duration of their training. Mug shots were taken –two poses each, with numbers held under each participant's chin. This was so a record of everyone could be kept and anyone arrested or missing when in Mississippi could be identified. 'Powers of Attorney' were also signed for each individual so that others could act on their behalf if incarcerated, hospitalized or killed.

For the next two weeks, SNCC field representatives, guest speakers and Mississippian movement workers introduced the 800 volunteers who showed up at Western College for Women in Oxford to the social, economic and political history of Mississippi, trained them in the nonviolent action that was to be followed in assisting negro voters to register and the techniques of passive resistance that were to be used should they be physically attacked\* or arrested.

[ \*For example, if attacked, participants were instructed to fall to the ground, attempt to curl into a ball, with legs closed, knees as close to one's head as possible and one's arms and hands over one's head for protection.]

On June 14 1964, busloads of volunteers from the university went south to Mississippi. Upon arriving at their destination, they were met by local negro volunteers and escorted to the store-front office that would be their headquarters for the duration of their stay. There they were assigned to different Freedom Houses where they would be billeted. Ian chose to stay at the same Freedom House as Marina as they had both volunteered, along with two local negro

volunteers, to teach in the same Freedom School of that community.

The very first day that Marina, Ian and the two negro volunteers –one male and one female were on their way to teach in their new school, the car in which they were driving was stopped by two local policemen for no apparent reason.

“Everybody get out of the car!” one of the policemen commanded, as he approached the automobile, his hand over the gun on his hip.

Amos, who was driving, whispered quickly to everyone “Don’t say anything, unless asked,” and got out of the car. The rest followed him. They all stood together facing the policeman.

“You were speeding,” the officer accused Amos.

“If you say so, sir,” Amos responded. He had been told that charges such as these would be contested in court by lawyers representing them.

“But we weren’t speeding,” Ian whispered to Tabitha.

“Shh,” she whispered back.

The officer overheard Ian and wheeled toward him. “What did you say nigger-lover?” he demanded to know, and leered at Tabitha knowingly.

Tabitha turned red with embarrassment by his insinuation. Marina clenched her mouth shut in anger.

Ian dropped his eyes and looked at the ground as he had been instructed to do so during his training session. “Nothing.”

“That’s better,” the trooper grunted and redirected his attention back to Amos.

“Now as I was saying, boy, you were speeding. What do you say to that?” he asked as he prodded Amos with his nightstick.

“If you say so, officer,” Amos repeated.

“I goddam-well say so,” replied to officer and prodded Amos again with the nightstick, but this time harder.

“Please don’t do that,” Amos responded and instinctively pushed the nightstick away.

The cop found the excuse he was looking for. Turning to his buddy who was watching everything with an amused look on his face, he exclaimed “You saw that Jack -resisting arrest,” and turning to Amos, began to beat him with his nightstick.

Marina could no longer restrain herself. Rushing forward, she attempted to grab the nightstick from the policeman but was knocked to the ground by him.

In spite of his training, Ian acted instinctively. Hurling himself at the policeman, he wrested the stick from the surprised policeman’s hand, threw it away and huddled over Marina like a giant tent. What followed was the worst beating that he had ever endured in his life – his father’s paled by comparison. He was subsequently taken to jail along with the others, and charged with ‘obstruction of justice’. Other civil rights workers faced similar harassments for the rest of the summer and three disappeared altogether – presumably murdered.

At the end of the summer and on the way back North on their bus, and in spite of the relative lack of success of their mission, one student was heard to say piously to everyone that ‘God’s Will will eventually prevail.’ to which Ian, still sore from his beating, remarked bitterly “God doesn’t give a damn about human beings!”

Placing her hand gently on his bruised arm, Marina had said softly, “But other human beings do, Ian. Other human beings do!”

September 8, 1965

It was at the beginning of his third year of university that Ian met Rachel. He had just come from a Biology class which was one of his third-year science options, and was sitting in 'The Arbor Room', the local campus hang-out for students. It was there that students went to have lunch, or a coffee and meet their friends and members of the opposite sex. Ian often went there himself for the same purposes. This time, he was at a corner table by himself reading 'Human Biology' by Hans Weiss, his biology professor.

"Hi," a voice said. "I'm Rachel. May I sit here?"

Glancing up from his textbook, Ian saw one of the not-so-good-looking girls that he had seen in the biology lab standing before him. As was his habit, he had checked out all the girls in the lab the moment that he had entered the room the first day of lab-work but had rejected all of them at the time as being unworthy of his attention.

Looking around to see why she had singled him out to sit with, he could see why. The room was beginning to fill with students who were looking for seats in order to have lunch. It was obvious that the female student was just looking for a place to sit down to have her own lunch. "Sure," he said and went back to reading his textbook.

"I see that you're in my biology lab," the voice said. "I'm one of the lab assistants."

Looking up again, Ian saw that the young woman had sat down, had begun eating her lunch and was speaking to him. This time he took a closer look at her. She did have a head of beautiful black hair, even if it was frizzy and unkempt. But her face, which should have had a smooth olive complexion, was puffy and sallow looking. What should have been big brown beautiful doe-like eyes were marred by black bags under them. Her nose was fleshy and slightly hooked, betraying her probable Middle Eastern ancestry. Her lips, while full enough, were devoid of lipstick and taut, as if uptight about something. Her chin had a few red spots which if not attended to would probably develop into acne. The blouse that she wore was dirty-white and nondescript. In short, she was 'mousy looking' -that is, with the exception of her breasts. Her not-too-large, but magnificently well-proportioned breasts struggled under the dingy blouse that she wore as if to escape their surly bonds. One could see the nipples of her breasts pushing against the fabric and it was obvious that she was not wearing a brassiere.

Under normal circumstances Ian would have liked to investigate the situation further, but he had just started formally dating Carole who, in spite of the fact that she had not 'put-out' yet, was much better looking than the girl sitting opposite him, so he decided to pass. "Yeah, I guess I am," he replied and went back to reading his book.

The girl must have taken the hint because a few minutes later she got up, picked up her tray, walked over to another table, said something to the good-looking guy sitting there and sat down. But Ian did take the opportunity to take a look at the rest of her body as she walked away. *Boy is she built!* he thought. She couldn't have been more than five and a half feet tall, but her long, slender

but well-proportioned legs must have gone clear up to her waist! Her hips undulated seductively inside her tight blue-jeans as she moved across the room. He began to have second thoughts about his relationship with Carole.

Just then, Pete, one of Ian's Physics classmates came over with a cup of coffee in his hand. "I see you've met 'Charlotte the Harlot'," he said as he sat down.

"Charlotte the Harlot?" Ian wasn't sure that he had heard Pete correctly.

"Yeah, the girl who you were just talking to."

"I think that she said her name was Rachel," Ian said, not having paid much attention to her name at the time.

"Her real name is Rachel Danan. But the guys like to give nicknames to all the girls on campus that they're screwing. That girl over there is called 'Lottie the Body'," he continued, pointing out one girl with her hand on the inside thigh of one of the guys with whom she was sitting. "And that girl over there," he said, pointing to another one who was behaving herself for the time being, "is called 'Tawdry Audrey' and that one over there is called 'Luscious Lucy'," pointing to a third girl. "It looks as if 'Wicked Wanda' hasn't arrived yet. Yeah, when I came in I could see 'Charlotte' trying to pick you up," Pete went on, continuing to use Rachel's nickname. "They say that she's a great lay and will have sex with anybody," he sighed wistfully. "It looks as if you were next," he added, half-jokingly.

"You're crazy. I wouldn't touch those kinds of girls with a ten-foot pole. Haven't you heard of VD?" Ian asked Pete rhetorically and picked up his books to go to his next class.

"Haven't you ever heard of condoms?" shot back Pete, grinning as he also got up.

September 9, 1965

The next afternoon, as he sat in the biology lab, Ian took a more objective look at 'Charlotte the Harlot' who was peering attentively into a student's microscope across the room. *It has been a long-time since I've had sex and considering that Carole will not 'put out' for me, this might just be the beginning of a beautiful friendship*, he chuckled, paraphrasing Humphrey Bogart in the movie 'Casablanca'. *And there's always condoms*, he rationalized.

He began to become aroused by the mental pictures that he fantasized of himself having with 'Charlotte' and decided that he had better make his move while he could still stand up without his aroused state showing. Getting up, he looked to see that no one was paying attention to him and moved quickly over to 'Charlotte'. "Hi. My name is Ian Campbell."

Looking up from the student's microscope, 'Charlotte' said, "Oh! Hi. It's you. What can I do for you?"

*Well, you could let me have sex with you*, Ian felt like blurting out, but instead said. "Rachel," remembering just in time to use her first name correctly, "I just wanted to apologize for ignoring you yesterday, but I was up to my butt in alligators trying to get ready for this lab. My name is Ian, -Ian Campbell. I'm really having difficulty understanding this stuff," he lied. "I understand that you are the best student there is in this subject," he said, this time telling the truth. "Perhaps, we could meet somewhere and have a coffee together after class and we could discuss you helping me a bit."

Glancing at his groin, Rachel said "Sure. When's your last class over?"

"Four o'clock," he replied quickly.

"Okay. I'll meet you at Dino's at five. The least that you can do is buy me a coffee," Rachel said, and went back to peering into the microscope.

For the rest of the afternoon, Ian could hardly concentrate on his classes. *And the price of a coffee or two isn't too much to pay for sex*, he conceded to himself.

\*\*\*

After his last class, which was with Marina, Ian rushed back to his room for a quick shave and a shower, splashing on a little bit of 'English Leather' aftershave onto various parts of his body before getting dressed.

Within an hour, he was sitting impatiently in the first booth near the door in 'Dino's Diner' waiting for 'Charlotte' to appear. *I'm going to have to stop thinking of Rachel as 'Charlotte'. If I call her 'Charlotte' by mistake, instead of 'Rachel', it'll be my shortest conquest attempt on record*, he warned himself and laughed.

Just then Rachel walked in. "What's so funny?" she declared defensively, seeing no one else that he could have been laughing at.

Ian reddened. He stood up. "I'm sorry, Rachel" he said apologetically, mixed with relief at getting her name right. "I wasn't laughing at you. I was laughing because I was thinking of a joke that someone told me earlier today," he lied. "Please sit down," motioning to the seat beside him.

Rachel was a little surprised at Ian's show of courtesy by him standing.



She couldn't remember any other male she had dated ever having done the same for her. Her demeanor softened a little. She sat down in the booth, but opposite him. "Hello again," she said warily.

"Hi," Ian said. "I guess I had better introduce myself properly this time. My name is Ian Campbell," he said, holding out his right hand.

"Yes, you've already told me that. And my name is Rachel Danan," Rachel said, and awkwardly took his extended right hand in her left hand. Her right hand wore a white cotton glove which she kept partially hidden at her side. *I wonder what the hell that's all about?* Ian wondered in passing. *Probably eczema*, he concluded

"So, what was the joke that you were laughing at?" Rachel challenged Ian, trying to ensure that it was not her at whom he had been laughing.

He thought quickly. "Well, it's not really fit to tell to a lady."

"Oh, that's too bad. I like a good joke!" Rachel said a little disappointedly. "Okay, I've got one for you. What do you get when you cross a gorilla and a parrot genetically?"

Ian thought for a moment and then replied innocently enough, "I don't know. What do you get when you cross a gorilla and a parrot genetically?"

Rachel smiled and in her normal voice, replied "A five-hundred-pound green, hairy monster that says," and then in a high-pitched voice "Polly wants a cracker," followed by a loud deep, growling voice "right freaking now!" slamming her fist down on the restaurant table at the same time.

Everyone in the small restaurant jumped at the sound of the loud noise and some of the older patrons in the small diner shook their heads disapprovingly at the implication of her use of the word 'freaking'. The young male university students who were there and knew of her reputation, leered at her lasciviously, while their girlfriends who they were probably banging and knew well the meaning of the word 'freaking', blushed coquettishly.

Ian reddened and slouched a little lower on his seat in the booth. He had expected his meeting with her to be a little more discreet than this. Rachel grinned perceptibly at his discomfort.

"Coffee?" he asked, almost in a whisper, looking furtively around the room.

"Sure," Rachel said, boldly staring down the young men who were still ogling her. "With cream and sugar -and two chocolate donuts."

Ian motioned the waitress over who smirked at him and asked "What can I do for you?" emphasizing the word 'I'. From the tone of her voice, Ian got the distinct impression that Rachel frequented this spot a lot and with a lot of different guys.

"I don't think I'll have a chocolate donut, but thanks for ordering for me anyways," he said to Rachel.

"I wasn't ordering for you -I was ordering the two for myself."

"Oh," Ian stammered. "In that case, please bring us two coffees, -one black, one with cream and sugar and two chocolate donuts," reddening a bit more, embarrassed not only by his faux pas but also because he knew that the waitress was probably aware that he was there for the sole purpose of seducing Rachel as had other guys who had taken her there.

While the waitress was getting their coffee and Rachel's donuts, Ian leaned forward and blurted out "Look Rachel, I'll get right to the point. I'm on a fully paid scholarship here and if I don't pass all my science courses with an A average, I lose it. I'm doing really well in my other science courses such as Physics and Calculus, but damned if I can get interested enough in Biology to do as well. I was wondering if you could tutor me a bit."

"Yeah, I know what you mean. I have the same problem with Calculus," Rachel sighed. This time she spoke without bravado because if she didn't get at least a 'B' in Calculus that year, she would lose her own scholarship.

Seeing his opportunity, Ian made his move. "I have a suggestion. Why don't we tutor each other? You can help me with Biology and I can help you with Calculus."

The waitress brought them their coffee and Rachel's donuts. "Hmm... let me think about it for a moment," Rachel said as she drank her coffee and ate her two donuts. Ian waited impatiently for her answer.

After what seemed to be a respectful amount of time, Rachel replied "It sounds like a good idea to me. Okay, it's a deal."

Ian smiled triumphantly! "That's great. When can we begin?" He could hardly wait to get her into the sack.

"Anytime that you wish," Rachel said indifferently.

"How about Sunday afternoons?"

"Sounds good to me. That way, it leaves Friday and Saturday evenings free for our own social lives."

"That's great!" Ian said, repeating himself. In this way, he could have the best of both worlds. *I can see Carole, Friday or Saturday evenings and bang Rachel on Sundays. And if Carole says anything, I can always say that Rachel is tutoring me.*

"When can we begin?" he prompted impatiently, hoping to be able to have sex with Rachel as soon as possible.

"This Sunday would be fine. We can meet in the library."

"Okay. It's a deal. See you then," Ian said getting up and extended his hand to her.

Rachel pretended not to see it. "See you then," she said, got up and walked to the front entrance to the restaurant. She hesitated, thought for a moment, and then came back to the booth. "Oh, by the way, Ian."

"Yes?" he replied eagerly.

This time, Rachel was more discreet. Leaning over, she whispered into his ear. "But I won't let you have sex with me." She then turned and walked out the door.

Ian sat stunned for a moment then said to himself, *We'll see about that! And if not Rachel, then there's always the waitress!*

December 1, 1965

"Oh, my God!" whispered Rachel to herself as she peered into the electron microscope.

It was almost midnight and she had spent the afternoon and most of that evening in the Biology lab working on her research project. She was the only one still there. Picking up the telephone, she phoned Ian and when he answered it, shrieked into it "Ian, I'm in the Biology lab. Get over here right away!" and slammed down the receiver before he could respond. She then went back to her microscope and continued to examine what she had seen.

Ian had just finished a difficult assignment for the next day, had gone to bed and had just fallen asleep when Rachel called. He had been trying to seduce her now for the last three months and was getting nowhere. Since meeting her in the restaurant, he had spent every Sunday afternoon with her, pretending that he needed help with his knowledge of Biology (which he grudgingly admitted to himself that he did), and every Sunday evening tutoring her in Calculus in which she definitely needed help. In spite of his repeated attempts to get Rachel to move their lessons to his or her room for a more personal 'hands-on' approach, she had repeatedly and firmly declined his suggestions. It wasn't as if he wasn't being successful in meeting other female students on campus and having sex with them but he considered Rachel a special challenge. He knew darn well from campus rumors that she was having sex with other guys. He decided that if he wasn't successful in seducing Rachel by the end of the semester then he would quit seeing her. Besides, by then, he would have gotten the required A that he needed in the biology class in which he was enrolled.

After Rachel's phone call, Ian's first reaction was to say to himself, *The hell with her!* and go back to bed, but she did have a sense of urgency in her voice and apart from being curious as to what she was up to, he didn't want to risk of not getting at least one more chance to seduce her. *The things that I do for sex*, he sighed, and reluctantly hurried to the Biology building.

*Yeah, she's still there*, he observed, as he looked at the lights still shining in what he assumed to be her lab window.

"So, what's up?" he asked as he strolled into the lab, his hands in his pockets, trying to appear nonchalant.

Excitedly, Rachel commanded, "Come here and look at this slide sample."

Ian's first thought was *She's got VD!* His second thought was. *No wonder, with all the guys she's banging!* "What's wrong?"

"Nothing really, Ian. It's just that I've been looking for a gene and I think I've found it!"

Rachel's unexpected reply momentarily confused Ian. After a few seconds of attempting to accept the obviousness of what she had just said, he shook his head in disbelief. "Excuse me," he said angrily. "You phone me in the middle of the night and tell me to get right over here because you found a gene? Jesus Christ! Even I know that genes exist!" He was still grouchy from being awakened in the middle of the night.

For a moment, Rachel flinched, then realized that Ian wasn't about to strike her as her father used to do. But she had never seen him so angry! Usually,

he was always so pleasant –especially when he was trying to seduce her. Regaining her composure, she said defensively “I’m sorry. I just wanted you here to share my discovery of something that I think is very important.”

Ian’s voice softened a little, but he was still angry. “And exactly what would that be?” he asked sarcastically.

Rachel glanced at Ian, not sure that she should go further for fear of him ridiculing her. “I think that I’ve found the genesis gene,” she replied cautiously.

In spite of his ennui, Ian’s interest was piqued. “The genesis gene? “What the hell’s a genesis gene?”

Rachel began her little lecture. “Well, as you know, all living organisms consists of cells. I won’t go into detail about the differences between plants and animal cells because you’ve heard all this before in class, but I just want to remind you that all cells whether they are plant or animal contain chromosomes and each chromosome contains genes. And it is the genes of the organism that carry hereditary information about the plant or animal.”

Ian nodded his head in agreement. “Yeah, okay. I’m familiar with Mendel’s\* experiments. Go on,” he encouraged.

[ \*It was the German friar, Gregor Mendel, who by 1866 had demonstrated that certain characteristics of peas are transferred from one generation to the next and is considered to be the father of Genetics, although the actual word ‘gene’ was not coined until William Bateson used the word for the first time in his work in 1905.]

Rachel went on. “As you also know, according to the theory of evolution, all life, including plant life, is supposed to have evolved from one single-celled organism. Now, I figure if that’s true, then some of the genetic material from this first cell must have been transferred to the next generation of that cell and so on up the evolutionary ladder over the last three billion years until it reached the human species. Admittedly, some of these genes will have been modified as a result of ‘genetic drift’ and random mutation and some of these genes will have become inactive and have no visible effect on the human body, but a least one common gene –what I call the ‘genesis gene’ – must continue to exist in every organism if evolution is to continue to take place.”

Ian could see where she was going. “And that’s the specific gene that you’re looking for?” Her logic made sense.

“Yes.”

“And just how do you intend to find it? Remember genes, are so small that they cannot be seen even with an electron microscope.”

Rachel saw the look of skepticism on Ian’s face. “But chromosomes can, and I’m using a new technique called ‘DNA sequencing’ to compare the alleles of similar chromosomes. But I won’t go into that now. Come over to these two microscopes and I’ll show you what I mean.” She had two electron microscopes set up side by side in front of her.

“Look into this microscope,” she instructed him, indicating one of them. “What do you see?”

Ian did so. “I see a slide of something with some vertical marks on it.”

“Well that’s a slide of some DNA markers on a chromosome. All DNA is

made of protein and contains chromosomes of the organism from which is taken. Each chromosome contains a specific number of genes. The clumps or chromosomes that you see contain the genes of the X chromosome of a male chimpanzee. Using DNA sequencing we are able to metaphorically tease out these genes and compare their protein sequences to the DNA of other species. Now try to remember what you just saw.”

“Got it.”

“Okay, now look into the other microscope. It’s a slide of the DNA of the X chromosome of a male human. Ian looked at the slide through the microscope. What do you see?”, Rachel said.

“I see the same thing as on the first slide.”

She smiled with satisfaction. “I thought so. Those two gene sequences are identical.”

“But I thought you said that one of these sequences came from a chimpanzee and the other came from a human being?”

“I did. But they are identical, because, my theory is that in spite of having evolved separately millions of years ago, a lot of the DNA of chimpanzees and humans must be identical in order for them to have similar physical characteristics.”

“What’s the significance of that?”

“Well, it means that not only should one be able to trace all organisms to a common ancestor, but one should be able to recombine the DNA of the cell of one living organism with the DNA of any other organism to create a new organism. And I shouldn’t tell you this, but I have reason to believe that at least one professor of this university is already attempting to genetically cross a chimpanzee with a human-being and may have succeeded.”

“Is this one of your jokes?”, Ian asked, remembering the restaurant joke about the parrot and the gorilla.

“I wish it were, because the implication of cross-breeding different organisms may have severe repercussions which we have not considered. On the other hand, it may also be possible to fix some inheritable diseases of humans by modifying their own genes or substituting them with healthy ones.”

“Such as...?”

Rachel began her litany. “Hemophilia, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, cystic fibrosis...”

Holding up his hand, Ian motioned her to stop. “Okay, okay, I get it.”

“Now look at this slide,” Rachel said as she reached over to insert another slide in Ian’s microscope.

It was then that Ian noticed the additional vestigial thumb on Rachel’s right hand. When she had first come into the lab, she had taken off the white glove which she always wore when in the presence of other people, in order to be able to better focus the microscopes when she set them up. In her excitement, she had forgotten to put the glove back on. Ian looked at her quizzically.

Rachel’s whole demeanor suddenly changed. She reddened. “Well, what the hell are you staring at?” she snarled.

Ian stammered in embarrassment. “I...I... didn’t mean to stare, but I couldn’t help noticing your thumb.” And then, in an attempt to mollify her, said,

“You know, Anne Boleyn, Henry the Eighth’s second wife, was supposed to have had a vestigial finger on her right hand.” *I don’t know why Rachel’s parents didn’t have it amputated when she was a baby*, he said to himself.

“That’s no goddamned consolation to me! And that’s probably why he chopped her bloody head off,” Rachel snapped.

“Come on Rachel, that’s not the worst thing that could happen to you,” Ian said again trying to mollify her. “Things could be worse.”

Holding back her tears, Rachel said bitterly, “Yeah, I could have three tits.”

Ian laughed in spite of the situation. “No, really. You have a lot going for you. You’re well educated, you’re very intelligent and frankly, you could be very attractive. Any young man would be proud to be married to you.” *That is if you would stop whoring around, lose a bit of weight and clean yourself up*, he felt like adding.

Rachel brightened perceptively. “Do you really think so?”

“Yes,” Ian said emphatically, realizing for the first time how vulnerable Rachel really was. At that moment, he knew that he could have sex with her if he really wanted to. All he needed to do was to pretend that he loved her.

Wiping away the trace of tears from her eyes, Rachel said, “Thanks Ian. I needed that. But please don’t tell anyone about my thumb.”

“I won’t.”

Rachel was about to say something, but changed her mind. Instead, she said a little reluctantly, “It’s getting late. I guess we’d better go now. We both have classes in the morning. Thanks for coming over and allowing me to share my ideas with you. I think that anyone else would have laughed at me.”

“Would you like me to walk you back to your place?” Ian asked. For a moment, the thought of trying to seduce her when they got to her place crossed his mind. *What a jerk!* he thought of himself and immediately rejected the idea.

“No, that’s not necessary. I have a few things to do before I go.”

Ian was reluctant to leave her. “Are you sure?”

Rachel smiled wanly, “Yes, I’m sure.”

Ian hesitated, again. “Well, good night then.”

“Good night. And thanks for everything, Ian”

After he left, Rachel stood at the lab window as she watched Ian walk slowly toward his dormitory, his jacket pulled up around his neck against the cold winter wind. “Good night, sweet prince. May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest,” she whispered.

December 31, 1965

It was New Year's Eve 1965. Ian had decided to go nowhere for the Christmas holidays because he had nowhere to go. He certainly wasn't going back to Bay's End to visit his abusive alcoholic father; his grandfather had died that summer; he had no siblings; and Miss Irwin, his high-school science teacher and lover, had taken on a new male student protégé shortly after Ian had left Bay's End in 1962, been caught, fired and left Bay's End never to be heard of again.

Nor had he kept in touch with any jock friends that he had grown up with because he felt that he no longer had anything in common with them. Many of them had dropped out of high-school, got jobs in the local stores and supermarkets and the only thing that they'd ever been interested in when he had associated with them in High School was drinking, fast cars and fast girls. It was unlikely that any of them had blossomed into interesting conversationalists since then. The friends of his who had graduated with him had left Bay's End to go to college or pursue more ambitious careers elsewhere.

Ian's one consolation of being alone during the Christmas holidays on campus was that he'd see Marina just about every day, although she had not been feeling well and was too tired to spend New Year's Eve with him.

It was just after midnight that evening while he was in his room reading the latest issue of 'Scientific American' that John, his room-mate, had rushed into the room.

"Rachel's trying to kill herself," he panted.

"What?" exclaimed Ian, jumping up from the chair in which he sat reading.

"Yeah, she's up on the roof of the Biology building, getting ready to jump off."

"Damn!" Ian exclaimed and raced for the door, not bothering to put on a coat. The Biology building was only a block away. "Has someone called the police?" he shouted over his shoulder as he ran out the door.

"I don't know." John replied, grabbing Ian's coat and hurrying behind him.

Racing across the campus, Ian was at the foot of the Biology building in a few minutes. The police, if they had been called, hadn't arrived yet. The building was in darkness, as one would expect at twelve o'clock midnight in the middle of what was probably going to be the worst snowstorm of the winter. *And it's colder than a whore's heart*, Ian remarked to himself as he put on his coat and gloves that John had the presence of mind to bring with him.

Ian tried the front door of the building. It was locked. All the other doors were probably locked too. *There's no sense running around the outside of the building trying to find out*, he thought. Time was of the essence.

"Rachel!" he yelled as loud as he could at the top of the building and into the howling darkness. There was no answer.

"Rachel! Rachel! It's me, Ian!" he repeated.

This time, a slurred, weak and frightened voice from somewhere above him replied, "Whatya you want?"

"I want to talk to you."

"Well, I don't wanna talk to you or anyone else. I'm gonna jump off this goddam roof," Rachel said louder and defiantly.

*Christ! She's drunk and is probably just crazy enough to do it,* Ian thought and hurriedly began climbing up the fire escape ladder in front of him that was attached to the side of the building.

"Why do you want to jump off the roof?" Ian yelled above the wind as he climbed up the ladder, hoping to stall Rachel long enough to reach her before she jumped.

"I'm fat and I'm ugly," Rachel wailed.

Ian hesitated to get his breath. "That's not true," he yelled and kept climbing.

"Nobody loves me," she whimpered.

"It's okay. Nobody loves me either," Ian replied truthfully.

"But you have lotsa friends," Rachel countered. "I don't have any."

"That's not true," Ian shouted. "You have lots of friends," and kept climbing.

"Nnnnnname one," Rachel chattered with the cold and with fear.

Ian groped for a name, but couldn't think of even one. Sure, he'd seen Rachel with lots of different guys but he knew that they only dated her so that they could have sex with her and couldn't care less about her as a person. And come to think of it, he had never even seen her with another girl.

"I'm your friend," he blurted out as he reached the top of the ladder and clambered over the top of the parapet.

Rachel sat huddled against the closed door to the roof, shivering like a frightened animal. She looked up timidly and said "Are you really, Ian?" with a little bit of hope in her voice.

"Yes, I am," he said. -and found himself saying again "Yes, I am," this time meaning it.

"Oh, Ian," Rachel moaned and crawled toward him on her hands and knees. "He raped me," she sobbed. "He invited me to his frat house to celebrate New Year's Eve," she whimpered, "and he raped me. And when he was done raping me Ian, he threw me out in the snow and said that I was fat and ugly!"

"Shhh. You're okay now, Rachel," Ian said as he helped her to her feet, putting his arm around her protectively, guiding her to the unlocked door on the roof, and carefully down the five flights of stairs.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, they were confronted by a campus policeman. "What the hell's going on here?" he demanded to know.

"Nothing serious, officer," Ian replied. "My friend here just had a little too much to drink for New Year's Eve and I guess she just wanted to see the campus from the top of the Biology building. She's alright now."

The officer hesitated for a moment, and then said. "I'll have to charge her with being drunk and disorderly as well as trespass. After all, the law is the law," he added officiously.

"Well then, can I accompany her to the police station?" Ian asked. "She's in no condition to go home alone afterwards."

"Okay," the officer replied indifferently, shrugging his shoulders. It was no skin off his nose.



Ian helped Rachel into the back of the waiting police car, got in beside her and put his arm around her. She leaned into him, began to sob uncontrollably, got the hiccups and promptly vomited on the back of the front seat of the police car. Fortunately, the vomit missed both Ian and the policeman in the front seat, who would have been really angry had it hit him. As it was, he whined "For Christ's sake, lady!" and would have added more but for Ian's quiet reply. "Yes officer. Please, for Christ's sake."

Other than for Rachel's quiet sobs and huddled in Ian's arms in the back seat of the police cruiser, the rest of the trip to the police station was uneventful. Reaching the station, Ian helped Rachel out of the car and helped her wobble into the building. "It's okay. It's okay," he kept reassuring her. "Everything's going to be okay."

Rachel stood in front of the desk officer. Looking up from his paperwork and peering from behind gold-framed glasses, the older, grey-haired desk sergeant yawned "Name," as he reached for an arrest form and inserted it into his typewriter.

"Excuse me officer, but is this arrest really necessary?" Ian interjected.

"Yes, it is," the desk sergeant replied politely. "This officer has charged her with being drunk and disorderly in a public place," pointing to the young officer who had arrested her. "She was also trespassing on University property which is private."

"But officer," Ian pleaded, "admittedly, she did have a little too much to drink but it is New Year's Eve. And as for disorderly conduct, she really didn't bother anyone. The only person that she inconvenienced was me."

"Well, that still leaves the trespassing charge which could be elevated to the status of 'Breaking and Entering'"

Ian responded. "Well, she is a student at the university and she does have keys to the Biology building and has been given permission to use the building whenever she wants to use it."\*

[ \*Which was true. By now, Rachel had decided to become a geneticist and had done so well in all her Biology courses that the Head of the Biology Department had made her his assistant and given her unrestricted access to the Biology building.]

The young arresting policeman interrupted. "The law's the law," he parroted.

The desk sergeant said reluctantly, "I'm sorry but I must still charge the young lady based on the arresting officer's information. That is unless he's prepared to drop the charges."

The young officer emphatically shook his head 'No'.

The desk-sergeant sighed and repeated his original question to Rachel. "Name?"

She hiccupped and drew herself up to her full height, stuck out her chest proudly, wobbled a bit with the effort and replied. "I am Rachel Danan - *Djudio!*"\* [\*Ladino: Jew]

The desk sergeant had begun to type. He stopped what he was doing.

Slowly, he took the paper from the typewriter, tore it half and threw it into the waste-paper basket.

"But, but, but...", the young policeman spluttered.

The sergeant glared at him and drawing his right thumb and index finger together across his own mouth motioned the young cop to zipper his lip! "The charges have been dropped," he stated. "You can go home miss," he said gently.

Ian heaved a sigh of relief. If Rachel had been arrested, God knows what would have happened! Although it was unlikely that she would have been expelled from the university, she could have lost her job as research assistant and as a result even might have attempted another suicide – and succeeded.

Turning to the arresting officer, Ian asked politely, "Call me a cab, will you?"

The young cop sneered "Okay! You're a cab!"

The desk sergeant glared at the young policeman again. Motioning him aside, Ian could see the older policeman say something to the young man and shake his finger at him repeatedly.\*

[ \*The desk-sergeant had been a U.S. soldier during WWII and was present during the liberation of Dachau. The images of the atrocities against the Jews that he had seen there had been seared into his memory for life. ]

The young policeman turned beet-red and with his head down in shame returned to speak to Ian. "I wish to apologize for what I just said. Of course I'll call you a cab sir," picked up the telephone, dialed a number, spoke into the receiver briefly then said. "Please wait over there, gesturing toward the lobby. There'll be a cab along in a minute." He slunk out of the room.

In a few minutes, a taxicab honked outside the police station. Ian took Rachel by the arm and guided her gently out the front door of the police station to the waiting cab. By the time they got back to where she lived, she was still a bit drunk. Ian managed to get her out of the cab and pay the cab-driver. Rummaging through her jeans, he began searching for the keys to the house and her apartment.

"Hey! what'ya doing?" she mumbled. "Get your dirty hans off me!" she protested as she attempted to push his hands away.

"It's okay, Rachel. It's just me -Ian. I'm just getting the keys to your apartment."

She grunted something incoherently, relaxed and let him continue searching her for her keys. Finding them, and unlocking the door to the house in which she rented a room, together they staggered through the front door and into her apartment which was on the ground floor at the front of the house.

Rachel's place was a dump! In the kitchen area, just inside the door, unwashed dishes lay in the sink and on a rickety filthy wooden table in the center of the room. Flies buzzed around them. A dirty white stove that looked as if its top had not been cleaned since the day that it had been installed sat against one wall. A sickly looking avocado green colored refrigerator stood beside it, its door ajar. The smell of rotting food permeated the apartment. A battered couch rested against the opposite wall of the room, its horsehair padding sticking out

under a dirty grey blanket. Its two 'end-tables' were wooden orange crates. There was no television.

As Ian helped Rachel into her bedroom, he caught a glimpse of her bathroom through a half-opened door. All the fixtures, including the bathtub were a dirty brown color. He found her bedroom in no better condition than the rest of the apartment. Her clothes were strewn everywhere -on the unmade bed, on the floor, on the furniture and sticking out of grey paint-peeled second-hand dresser drawers which had been left open at random. There was a pile of stained panties and dirty brassieres in a pile in one corner of the room. Holding Rachel with one arm around her waist, Ian managed to get the clothes off the bed and plopped her onto it. He turned to go. Rachel roused herself enough to mumble sleepily "You can make love to me if you wanna."

"No, it's okay, Rachel." It was the first time that he'd ever said 'No' to a woman.

"Whas the matter? Aren't I good enough for you? You used to wanna," she mumbled again.

Ian said nothing. He had decided after the night at the lab earlier that month to never try to have sex with Rachel again and although he continued to study with her and still talked to her almost daily over cups of coffee in the Arbor Room since then, he made no further attempts to seduce her.

Rachel was beginning to sober up. "Hmph! You probably prefer that bitch professor of yours," she yawned.

"Rachel, that's enough!" Ian warned, but his reprimand fell on deaf ears. She was almost asleep. Ian looked at her and shook his head sadly. "Happy New Year, Rachel," he whispered and kissed her gloved hand. She mumbled something in a foreign language, sighed contently and fell asleep. Ian left, locking her door securely behind him.

The next time that Rachel met Ian, she pretended that the events of that night had never happened. Ian never mentioned it as well.

January 5, 1966

Marina had said calmly "Ian, I have cancer."

At first, what she had said to Ian did not sink in. And when it did his first reaction had been one of disbelief.

"I don't believe it!" he had said, and when Marina had repeated the statement, he had bombarded her with a series of questions. "Are you sure? Did you get a second opinion? How serious is it?" When she told him it was terminal, he had fallen silent trying to think of something reassuring to say to her but could not.

March 20, 1966

It was Spring Break now and Marina was in the last stages of the dread disease. Since January, the cancer had spread quickly and systematically taken its toll on her body. She hadn't been able to teach since then, when in an attempt to keep the cancer from spreading, they had removed her right breast and stripped the lymph nodes from her armpits. Chemotherapy had failed and only succeeded in making her hair fall out. In the meantime, Ian had tried to spend as much time as could with her. She was now confined to a hospital bed. He was sitting beside her.

"You really should go home for the holidays, Ian," she said weakly.

"No, I think I'll stay in the city now. I have a lot of work to do in the lab," he lied.

Marina smiled wanly, aware of his subterfuge. She said nothing for a while and then said "You know, Ian, we all have to die sooner or later. It's the way that our universe works."

"I know," he said, hanging his head to hide his growing tears.

"Yes," Marina went on. "Dying is the price that we all pay for having lived. But you know, Ian, I've been one of the lucky ones."

"What do you mean, 'lucky ones' Marina?" he asked bitterly.

"Well, Ian, some people die when they are very young, some people die when they are middle-aged and some people die when they are very old. Some people die peacefully and some die violently. I was lucky enough to have lived to the ripe-old age of sixty-five and am about to die relatively peacefully and in the meantime, I've had a pretty good life."

"That's little consolation for those of us who love you, Marina," Ian said trying to restrain his tears. It was the first time that he had ever admitted to her that he loved her.

Marina reached out and stroked his blond hair. "I know, I know," she said comfortingly. "I've been lucky in that way too." Ian sat silent, trying to focus on what Marina was telling him. He had never thought of her dying prematurely like this. He had always envisaged her as in the poem by Yeats as 'old and grey and full of sleep and nodding by the fire'.

Marina winced a little in pain. "Ian, I have a strange request to ask of you."

"Anything, Marina! Anything!"

"Would you please hold me?"

“Of course.” Ian lay down on the bed beside her and put his arm around her. “Don’t be afraid, Marina.”

“I’m not afraid, Ian. I just want to feel loved once more as I was once when I was a young girl.”

“Oh, you are, Marina! You are!” Weeping now openly and cradling Marina with his right arm, Ian kissed her on the forehead. Marina closed her eyes, sighed, snuggled up to him and went to sleep. The morphine had done its work.

When she was asleep, Ian tiptoed out of the room and signaled to the on-duty nurse that he was leaving. The following morning when he went to visit Marina again, he was told that she had died quietly the night before.

March 24, 1966

It was raining when they buried her. Ian watched from the shadow of a crypt as the small funeral procession made its way to the side of the grave. There were a few faculty members there. There were no students. At the head of the procession was the minister, dressed in robes followed by paid pall-bearers carrying the casket. Reaching the grave, the pall-bearers placed the casket on supports over the grave and stepped back. Standing at the head of the grave, the minister began "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord..." and continued until the service was over.

Ian waited until after they had all left, which did not take long. After they had left, and before the gravedigger returned to fill in the gaping hole, he moved quickly up to the side of the still open grave. Speaking in a whisper he said something, reached down and gently dropped something\* into the hole and threw handfuls of earth on it until it was covered. He turned, and left the cemetery as unobtrusively as he had come.

[ \*It was his mother's wedding ring that his grandfather had given to him.]

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Returning to his apartment, Ian saw through tear-blurred eyes a large brown manila envelope waiting for him. Opening it, he saw that it contained two smaller white letter-sized envelopes and the locket that Marina always wore around her neck.

One envelope said 'TO BE OPENED FIRST' and was from a lawyer. It read: "I have been instructed to forward to you the enclosed sealed envelope and locket upon the death of Miss Marina Kahn."

Ian opened the second envelope. It contained a letter which read:

*'Dear Ian:*

*By the time you receive this letter, I will have died. As you already know, I have terminal cancer and it is only a matter of time before I succumb to it. All humans die sooner or later. But I have been one of the lucky ones. I've lived for a relatively long time (over 65 years) and have always been healthy, until I developed cancer. I was also fortunate enough to be born in a wealthy country such as ours. My father was president of the local bank and saw to it that I was well-fed, well-clothed and received a good education.*

*But most importantly of all Ian, I was one of the fortunate ones because I've been loved! As a teenager, I was very much loved by a young man, and I've been loved by you - as my friend. As someone who has been an important part of my life, I want to share something with you. I just hope that you won't be too disappointed in me by what I am about to tell you.*

*When I was seventeen years old, I had an illegitimate child - a boy. The father was a student in his senior year in high school, as was I. As children we had grown up together in a small town -our parents were the best of friends and neighbors. Robert and I had always loved each other as children and even told*

our parents one time when we six years old, that when we grew up we're going to marry each other 'just like our mommies and daddies had'.

Robert and I were inseparable. We played together; we walked to school together; we were in the same classes together; we even did our homework together. By the time Robert and I were sixteen we were still very much in love and as most young people at that age we just couldn't wait any longer. We began to express our love for each other physically. But Robert was afraid to try to get any kind of birth control from the local drugstore for fear that the druggist would tell our parents and they would forbid us from continuing to see each other. My family doctor was out of the question and birth-control clinics were unheard of at the time.

So, it was only a matter of time before I became pregnant. But I could not bring myself to tell Robert. I knew that if I told him that I was pregnant, he would have dropped out of school and insisted upon marrying me. And I felt in my heart that if Robert dropped out of school to marry me, he might eventually come to resent me and the baby for having prevented him from becoming the doctor that he had always wanted to be.

Perhaps I misjudged Robert's strength of character but I could not take the chance of destroying his life, so instead of telling him that I was pregnant, I told only my parents. My father was very upset about the effect that making my pregnancy public would have on his reputation and decided that instead of telling Robert or his parents, I would be sent away for a while to supposedly 'look after a sick aunt', which was done. Unwittingly, Robert continued to write to me throughout my pregnancy, always professing his undying love, and swore that he would never marry anyone else but me and would wait for my return.

Of course, when the baby was born, my parents insisted that I not keep it and reluctantly I agreed. After all, I was only seventeen. Neither Robert nor his parents knew anything about my pregnancy and my parents threatened to disown me if I kept the baby. Even my aunt was not prepared to let me live with her unless I gave up the baby. Well, anyway, the baby was taken away from me at birth and immediately given up for adoption. I was not even informed of the names of the people who adopted it. As a result of having given up the baby, I felt that I could never return to Robert. If I ever did, I believed that sooner or later he would discover that I had given away his baby and never forgive me. So, after the baby was given up for adoption, I lied to Robert. I told him that I was no longer sure that I loved him and that perhaps we should date other people while we were both away at different colleges. The result was that Robert wrote to me a letter in which he stated that he could not live without me and hanged himself in his father's garage.

After Robert's death, I had second thoughts about having given up my baby. Robert was dead and I could no longer hurt him by making it known what I had done. Besides, Robert had been the only man that I had ever loved and after his death I vowed never to love again. Possessing his child would be sufficient. I asked my parents to try to help me find my baby but they refused. I tried to contact the agency through which my baby had been adopted. They refused, citing the confidentiality contract that I had signed, even though I was only seventeen at the time. I could go no further in my search.

*For the rest of my life, I have lived with the guilt of having abandoned my baby. For years, I have worried about whether or not he's okay. Is he still alive? Did his adopted parents ever abuse him? Did they love him? Being adopted, could they ever love him as much as I would have? Would they defend him from the world as I would? For almost fifty years those questions have haunted me. And then you came into my life. The first day that you walked into my class, for a moment I thought that you were my son, until I realized that you were way too young to be him. But you looked so much like he would have, because I'm sure that when my own son had grown up he would have looked a lot like Robert -and you and Robert looked so much alike. Robert was so tall, handsome and strong. You even wear your hair the same way that Robert did -that 'little boy' blond haircut that I used to tease him about. And his eyes, how beautiful they were - blue as the ocean.*

*I know that it sounds wrong, but this is why I took a special interest in you. But I did not give any of my other students less than I usually gave them, I just gave you more. When you almost failed my first-year philosophy class, I would have let you go if you had decided to not continue in any of my classes, but I was so happy when you decided to stay because it meant that I would continue to see you.*

*I also want you to know that I also telephoned the principal of your old high school and know that your mother died giving you birth and how much your father abused you as a child. When I heard about that, my heart went out to you even more so. How I wanted to take you in my arms and comfort you as I would have my own son. But I knew that I could not do that for fear of my secret being discovered. So instead, I conspired to try to help you in other ways. I was the one that ensured that you continued to receive the scholarships that you deserved. How my heart leapt with joy when I heard of your getting a scholarship to M.I.T. next year, to work on your Ph. D. in Particle Physics. I also deliberately encouraged you to participate in the civil rights movement in which I was involved because I wanted you to develop compassion for others less fortunate than yourself. How easy it is for people to forget other peoples' needs, especially when they themselves have so much. And I want to tell you how proud I was of you when you came to Amos' and my rescue when we were attacked by that racist policeman when we were in Jacksonville, Mississippi. When you first came to me as a student, I know that you believed that because I was a professor of philosophy, I had all the answers. But none of us have. All of us are on a journey through life whether we know it or not, and each of us must find our own answers to our own questions. I have found the answers to mine and I leave it to you to find the answers to yours. I do know that having had you in part of my life has made it much more meaningful. The fact that we go through this life but once in the form we have now, made the times that I spent with you truly 'holy moments'.*

*And so, my beloved friend, to paraphrase the words of my favorite poet:*

*Farewell to you and to the time that I have spent with you. It was but yesterday we met in a dream. You have sung to me in my aloneness and I of your longings have built a tower in the sky. If in the twilight of eternity, we shall meet again,*



*you will sing to me a deeper song. And if our hands should meet in another universe, we shall build another tower in the sky.\**

*Thank you for having loved me.*

*Love*

*Marina.'*

[ \*Adapted from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*. New York: Knopf, 1970.]

Opening the heart-shaped locket that Marina had left him, Ian saw two pictures inside. On the left, was a picture of a teenage boy who looked very much like himself when he was younger, and on the right another picture of a beautiful young girl who could only have been Marina. Kissing her image in the locket, Ian closed it gently, put it in on the night table beside his bed, closed and locked the door to his room, lay down on his bed and wept silently for fear that John might hear him.

March 25, 1966

"Screw it! I don't need this crap anymore," Ian said to John, as he was packing his suitcase.

John was Ian's roommate. When John had first applied for a room in a campus dorm at the university, no one else would share a room with him when they discovered that he was homosexual. Ian had volunteered to do so. At first, the other residents of the dorm thought that Ian was homosexual also, but that rumor was quickly dispelled when they began to hear of his sexual prowess with the women on campus.

"Look Ian, I know that you are really upset over Miss Kahn's death. But don't you think that it would be a good idea to at least finish out the semester before you leave university?"

"No. The sooner I shake the dust of this place from my heels the better."

"But Ian," John pleaded. "You're so close to graduation. You've only got a few weeks to go. You've made the dean's list and in all-likelihood, you'll get a fellowship to work on your PhD next year. After the exams are over, perhaps you could take the summer off to get over Marina's death then."

"I said No," Ian said, slamming shut his suitcase.

John tried to dissuade him one more time. "What about Miss Kahn, Ian?" he said softly. "Don't you think that she would have wanted you to finish your education?"

Ian wheeled on John, clenching his fists. "Don't talk to me about Marina, John!" he hissed. "Don't you get it? She's dead and do you really think that she's in a position to think about anything now, you stupid fool?" he said angrily.

John blanched. He had seen Ian angry before. Not at him, *Thank God!* but with the male student who had raped Rachel. The same night that Rachel had been raped, Ian had raged to John that no woman deserved to be treated that way, regardless of how promiscuous she might be, had systematically tracked down the offending person the next day and had literally beaten his face to a pulp. The student had left the university a day later, but not before John had seen the result of Ian's handiwork. It looked as if the poor guy's face had been through a meat grinder!

"I'm sorry, Ian!" John stammered and backed off, white with fright. He had never seen him so angry.

Sensing his roommate's fear of him, Ian felt embarrassed. "I'm sorry John," he said and sat down quietly on the bed. "But have you ever lost anyone that you have loved more than anything else in the world?"

"Well, no," John lied, afraid to admit to Ian that he was in love with him and was afraid of losing him as Ian had lost Marina.

"Well, I have!" And for the first time in his life Ian divulged to someone the story of his life. "My mother died giving me birth, so I never did bond with her. My father was an abusive alcoholic so he doesn't count. All of my friends I grew up with were male jocks and god-forbid that I should bond emotionally with any of them! And the only relations that I had with teenage girls and a female high-school teacher were for sex. So, you can see, John" he confessed, "I had a pretty emotionally sterile life! That is until I met Marina."

“I didn’t know,” John said gently. “I always thought that you had it all together. You’re a good-looking guy. You’re intelligent. You’ve got lots of girlfriends. A lot of guys envy you, Ian. I know that I do,” he said worshipfully.

“Sorry to disappoint you,” Ian grimaced. “I didn’t realize how really screwed up I was when I first came here to university. For a while I thought that I had everything going for me. My marks were good and I was banging lots of girls, but it wasn’t until I became personal friends with Marina that I began to realize that there was something missing in my life. I spent a lot of time with her outside of class and I’m sure that everyone thought that I was banging her too, but I wasn’t.”

His voice began to soften. “I felt so alive when I was with Marina -even the time that I had the crap beat out of me in Mississippi. She was always interested in me for myself and not just because I was one of her students. She always took a personal interest in how I was doing in my other subjects, and always listened attentively to me whenever I had something to say.” His eyes moistened. “But what I loved most about her was that even when I would say something which was obviously stupid she would say ‘Well, that’s one way of looking at it, Ian’ and then proceed patiently to explain to me other possibilities.

“Well that’s that,” Ian said, jerking himself out of his reverie and getting up to leave.

John tried one more time to dissuade him from leaving. “Are you sure that I can’t convince you to stay,” he said quietly, afraid to invoke Ian’s wrath again by referring to Marina.

“No, John. Goodbye,” Ian said and began to walk out the door with his suitcase, not bothering to shake John’s hand. But as he did so, he said over his shoulder “You’re an okay guy, John,” which was the first time that he’d ever acknowledged any affection for him.

June 1966

Ian was standing on a makeshift stage in the smoked-filled basement of a downtown coffee house in Detroit, Michigan. He had not only dropped out of university, but, like many other disillusioned young men and women, had taken Timothy Leary's\* advice and 'turned on and tuned in' also.

[ \*Timothy Leary (b. October 22, 1920) was an American psychologist and writer known for advocating the exploration of the therapeutic potential of psychedelic drugs, especially LSD. He used LSD himself and developed a philosophy of mind expansion and the search for ultimate reality through the use of LSD, popularizing such catchphrases as "turn on, tune in, drop out". (Wikipedia)]

Ian had also let his hair grow long and ratty. The beard that he had grown was equally unkempt and untrimmed. His blue eyes that had once sparkled with intelligence now were glazed over dully under the influence of marijuana. It had been at least three months since Marina had died and he had only occasionally washed his body or clothes at the local YMCA since then. He had withdrawn whatever savings he had in his bank account and had spent the last three months bumming around the city, washing dishes for income, and frequenting the same hippie hangouts that he would have disdained as a student. He often visited bars, sat in a booth and eavesdropped on the other customers for companionship. Most of what he overheard was materialistic drivel.

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In front of the stage, a bunch of small round tables had been arranged. At each table sat one, or two people, dressed similarly to Ian. At one table, sat a couple of young teenage girls who were obviously only 'weekend hippies' because the beatnik garb of one of them was too fashionable and too clean. At another table sat a well-dressed middle-aged urban couple who had come into the inner city for a night of 'slumming'. Behind the audience was the entrance to the basement, lit up by a single bare light bulb. The rest of the room was almost in complete darkness except for the odd glow of cigarettes which momentarily lit up the red brick walls of the cellar.

*"Man, thou art suspended in time and space*

*"Clinging to your evolutionary perch,"*

Ian intoned to the beat of the bongo drums that were in the dark behind him.

*"Inching your way towards what?"*

he asked.

*"The fate of the dodo!"*

he yelled, answering his own question.

*"Eyes that will not see; ears that will not hear.*

*Bare rock and abyss."*

he concluded in resignation, shrugged his shoulders with indifference, left the stage and walked toward the only exit of the basement.

"Hey man, groovy," Ian could hear one person say as the rest of the audience snapped their fingers in agreement with his cynicism.

But as far as Ian was concerned, the only difference between himself and

these ‘pseudo-hippies’ in the room was that he really meant what he had just said. It really was a screwed-up world! If there was a God, then He, She or It had one helluva sadistic sense of humor. One minute, the goddamned president of the United States, gets assassinated by some guy too lazy to make a name for himself in any other way. The next minute, one of Marina’s negro friends, Malcolm Little, gets knocked off by one of his own race, and now the only person who ever made sense to him in this screwed-up world was dead. Dead! Dead! And what did she ever do to deserve dying such a death. Why was she dead and all those useless losers out there still alive? The existence of Man was a cosmic joke!

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“Hi,” said one of the two ‘hippie’ girls as he passed their table on the way to the exit.

“Hi,” Ian said and stopped.

“Can we buy you a cup of java?” she continued.

*Why not? I’m not going anywhere,* Ian thought. He was not expected to be at work washing dishes in a nearby restaurant until 8:00 a.m. “Sure,” he said and sat down beside the one who had invited him to join them.

He took a closer look at his two companions. The girl with the blond hair, leather head-band and bangs who had invited him to join them was really attractive. Her face was pleasant enough looking, but her dark brown eyes had a hungry look to them as she stared at him. She licked her cherry-colored lips invitingly. The multi-colored hippie love-beads that hung around her neck contrasted nicely with the white loose-fitting long-sleeved ‘peasant’ blouse that she wore, opened slightly at the neck, showing a bit of cleavage. It was obvious that she was not wearing a brassiere because he saw no brassiere outlines and could see her nipples pushing against the fabric of the blouse. Glancing down, he could see that her well-proportioned legs were encased in tight-fitting but well-worn jeans. Her sandals were scuffed indicating that they were well-used also. Her younger-looking friend, sitting with her, was rather plain looking. She had long mousy-brown colored straight hair also restrained by the required hippie headband – only hers was of a print material. Her pale face showed signs of teenage acne in spite of the fact that she tried to hide it with a skin-colored lotion. When she saw Ian looking at her, she lowered her eyes and bit her unpainted lips nervously. She wore a white peasant blouse as did her friend, but hers was fully buttoned and showed no bust line. Instead of jeans, she wore a loose-fitting skirt to hide her thin body and the material of it matched her remnant headband. Her skinny legs were encased in white ankle-socks which terminated in black loafers

*Why is it,* Ian asked himself, *that good-looking chicks always travel with plain-looking chicks? I know! No competition!*

“So, what’s up?” he asked.

“Oh, nothing much,” said the older attractive young woman. “We just thought that we’d drop in here to see what’s going on. I’m Sally and this is Brenda,” she said, motioning to her friend who said nothing and looked a little uncomfortable.

The three of them sat there in silence for a few minutes each drinking their

coffee and trying to think of something to say.

“Well, I guess I’d better get going. Thanks for the coffee,” Ian said, drank the rest of it and began to get up.

Sally hesitated and then blurted out quickly “We thought that the three of us could go to your pad and smoke a joint.”

Ian hesitated, shrugged his shoulders and said “Sure. Why not?” *What happens there will be up to them.*

Sally quickly paid the bill and the three of them walked to Ian’s place which wasn’t too far away, Sally on one side of him and Brenda protectively beside her.

The house in which Ian was living as well as the ones on either side of it had been ear-marked for demolition for the purpose of building an apartment building at some time in the future. In the mean-time all of the rooms of the houses, with the exception of their bathrooms and kitchens, had been rented out to individuals very inexpensively to discourage vandalism while waiting for demolition. These houses made ideal living accommodations for the hippies in the area, providing they did their own thing quietly and indoors.

Ian walked through the unlocked front door of his house and down the hall to his room, followed by his female companions. Unlocking the door, he reached inside, switched on the light-switch to the bare lightbulb that hung from a cord attached to the ceiling. He stood aside to allow the two young women to enter ahead of him. With the exception of a large mattress on the floor, the only other furniture in the room was a bureau, in which he kept the few clothes he owned. An empty suitcase lay in a corner.

Sally took in the view without surprise. It was obvious that she had been in these kinds of rooms before. Brenda looked a little uncertain about what to do and glanced at Sally for some kind of direction. Sally motioned toward the mattress. Brenda went over to the mattress and sat down meekly on the edge of it. Sally went over, flopped down beside her, pulled out a joint from the cloth handbag that she carried, lit it, took a deep drag from it and passed it over to Brenda who took a tentative puff but coughed uncontrollably when the smoke hit her lungs. Her eyes watered as she gasped for breath. Ian watched her with amusement. It was obvious to him that Brenda was new to this kind of lifestyle. He sat down on the mattress beside her, took the joint from her hand and took a deep drag himself. The three of them continued to take turns smoking the joint and when the roach became too short to hold, Sally snuffed it out, put it back in her handbag, pulled out a fresh joint, lit it, took a deep drag and passed it to Brenda who also took a puff, pretended to inhale it as she had after her first drag of the previous roach, and passed it on to Ian. This ritual went on for some time, until Sally yawned, looked at Ian, said, “I’ll have sex with you later. In the mean-time have fun, Brenda,” rolled over and went to sleep. Brenda remained huddled on the side of the mattress not sure what to do next.

“This is the first time that you’ve experienced this kind of thing, isn’t it?” Ian said

Brenda avoided Ian’s accusative stare by dropping her eyes. “Yes.”

“You’re a virgin aren’t you!”

This time Brenda blushed as well as dropping her eyes again and in a faint

voice said "Yes."

Ian stood up and said "I'm taking you home," and held out his hand.

Brenda looked relieved, took Ian's hand, got up quickly and said "What about Sally?" motioning to Sally who was still asleep.

"I'm sure that she can look after herself. Let's go."

While walking on the way to Brenda's home, Ian said, "Why the hell did you decide to get mixed up in this kind of activity anyway?"

"I don't know Ian. My mother and I moved to Detroit from Iowa a few weeks ago and Sally who is a Senior at my school befriended me and told me she would show me around."

"At your school?" Ian exclaimed. "Just how old are you anyway?"

"Sixteen."

"Jesus Christ, Brenda! Don't you know that it's a goddamned jungle out there?" pointing to the rest of the darkened city. "This isn't some jerkwater little farm town in Iowa you know!"

Brenda gulped. "I didn't think about that. I thought that Sally would take care of me."

"You got lucky this time, Brenda but I really don't recommend you doing this again. There are a lot of bad people out there! And drop that bitch Sally. She may be good-looking and appear to be popular at school but she'll use you and let you be used. And that's not what friends do. Friends protect each other. Promise me that you won't associate with that bitch again!"

"I won't, Ian," Brenda stammered as she realized what might have happened if Sally had introduced her to anyone else but him.

"Why the hell did you hook up with her in the first place?"

"Well, when mom and I came here from Iowa none of the students in my school seemed to like me with the exception of Sally."

"Yeah, it must be difficult for a young person to transfer to a new school in the middle of the year and expect to be able to make friends quickly. By then, most of the other students in that school have made their close friends for the year. I don't think that it's that the other kids don't like you. They just haven't had time to get to know you. Has anyone tried to bully you?"

"No. They just seem to ignore me- that is with the exception of Sally."

"Well, the fact that no one tried to bully you is a good sign, Brenda. Believe it or not, most young people are shy and are reluctant to initiate a friendship with another young person. Just continue to be pleasant with everyone and I'll bet you that sooner or later some of them will begin speaking to you on a regular basis."

"I never thought of that. But what if nobody responds to me in a friendly way?"

"Brenda the most important thing to remember in life is, that when all else fails, you always have yourself as your own best friend."

"How do you do that? Sometimes, I don't feel very friendly towards myself," Brenda said sadly.

Ian almost chuckled, but then realized how serious she really was. "Well, Brenda, you must always be true to yourself. And if you are, you will always feel good about yourself."

“What do you mean by that?”

“What I mean is, that whenever you have an important decision to make, always ask yourself the question ‘Am I doing the right thing?’ and your conscience will tell you whether or not your decision is the correct one.”

“I see what you mean. You know, I really didn’t feel good about doing what Sally wanted me to do.”

“There you go! But always remember that once you know in your heart that you have made the right moral decision do not to let other people pressure you into changing your mind and doing what they want you to do.”

“But sometimes, I’m so lonely. I’m not very pretty.”

“Yes, loneliness can lead one to give into peer pressure. But who in the hell told you that you were not very pretty?”

“Sally.”

“That bitch? She may be pretty on the outside but she’s ugly on the inside because of the way she tried to lead you astray. You may not be as pretty as her on the outside, but I’ll bet that you are beautiful on the inside. I’ll admit that you are not pretty in the classical sense of the word. But with the right kind of haircut and a little makeup you could be really attractive as you get older”

“What’s the difference between being pretty and being attractive?”

“Well to me and most men, the difference between being pretty and being attractive is that a pretty woman appears to be perfectly groomed with every hair on her head in place and is reminiscent of a porcelain doll. An attractive woman’s hairstyle may be a little less formal and there is usually some facial feature of theirs that appears to be unique. For example, Marilyn Monroe was pretty; Sophia Loren is attractive. In your case, you have very beautiful eyes like she has. But what really adds to a woman’s attraction is her personality.”

“But I have acne.”

Ian laughed. “So did I when I was your age.” But that’s just part of growing up. Eventually your acne will clear up by itself. In the meantime, just continue to wash your face daily, don’t use make-up, avoid certain foods such as chocolate and whatever you do, do not squeeze any pimples because it could leave scars. And as far as your body is concerned, remember you’re only sixteen and it has yet to develop fully. Yep, I think that you are going to be quite a looker when you get older.”

Brenda brightened. “Do you really think so?”

“Yes, I do. And if you stay true to yourself, someday you’ll find a young man who will treasure you.”

“Oh, I would like that so much. Do you have a girlfriend, Ian?”

“Not yet, but I’ll know when the right one comes along.”

By then, he and Brenda had reached the public housing in which she lived. They had no sooner climbed the stairs to the second floor on which Brenda lived when the door of an apartment at the top of the stairs flew open, a woman rushed out into the corridor and cried “My god, Brenda, where have you been? I’ve been worried sick about you. It’s one o’clock in the morning,” then staring at Ian’s beard and ratty hair, demanded to know “And who is this bum?” She had watched them approach the apartment building from the window of her apartment with a great deal of apprehension.



"It's okay, Mom. Ian brought me home."

"You didn't harm my baby, did you?" Brenda's mother demanded to know.

"No ma'am. She's okay."

Brenda said "It's okay, mom. Ian took care of me," and looked at him worshipfully.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, mom. I'm very sure," Brenda replied, emphasizing the word 'very'.

Brenda's mother turned to Ian. "Then I want to thank you for bringing Brenda home safely, young man. I'm sorry that I was so rude to you."

"I understand your concern ma'am and you're welcome. I guess I'd better be going. Good luck, Brenda and take care of yourself."

"I will. Goodbye, Ian and thank you for everything," Brenda said gratefully.

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Very early the next evening, Brenda made a point of visiting the coffee house that Ian frequented. This time she was dressed in regular street clothes, had removed any trace of makeup from her face except for a trace of a light-colored lipstick. She was alone. Ian saw her come in and waved her over to his table. She sat down.

"Hi kid! Can I buy you a coffee?"

"No thanks. I understand it's bad for acne," Brenda said seriously.

"What about a joint?" he teased.

Brenda grimaced as if she had a bad taste in her mouth. "Never again."

"Good girl."

"Ian, I came here tonight because I want to thank you for preventing me from doing something really stupid last night. I've told mom about everything that happened and she was very impressed with your behavior. She says that I can continue to see you even though you are a lot older than I am. As a matter of fact, she wants you to come to supper tomorrow night."

*It might be a good idea to be around normal people for a change,* Ian thought. "That would nice, Brenda. I think I'd like that. But you realize that you and I can only be friends."

"Of course. Mom knows that, but she says that with no father in my life and no brothers and sisters, it might be a good idea to have an older man in my life – something like a big brother."

Ian thought for a moment. "That's an interesting idea. You know Brenda, I never had any brothers and sisters in my life as well. I think that I might enjoy being part of your family for a while."

The following day when Ian showed up for supper he'd had a haircut, shaved his beard, had taken a good steam bath to sweat the smell of marijuana out of his skin and was wearing clean street clothes. When he knocked at Brenda's door and she answered it, she didn't recognize him at first, until he spoke and smiled.

"Oh my god!" she said. "You're beautiful!" This time it was Ian who blushed. When Brenda's mother saw him, she could only say "Oh my!" and felt her loins stir. After supper, the three of them spent the evening together and

Brenda's mother, whose name he learned was Jan, told him the story of her and Brenda's life – including her having divorced her husband for infidelity. In return, Ian told them of his own life to date, but left out the sordid details.

After that, Ian visited Brenda and her mother often in the evening after he had finished work for the day and usually helped Brenda with her math and science homework. One night when asked if she ever saw Sally at school, Brenda said "Oh Sally got pregnant and dropped out of school. But I have a couple of new friends," and gave Ian a look of undying gratitude. On Sundays, Ian would often take Brenda, when she wasn't with her new friends, to various places of interest in the city – all of which he himself had never seen before, while Brenda's mother cooked supper for the three of them. From time-to-time, Brenda's mother would look quizzically at Ian as if to say 'You're not having sex with my daughter are you?' to which Ian would unconsciously shake his head 'No'. Each time that Brenda's mother did so, Ian knew that he could probably have sex with Jan if he wanted to. She was certainly attractive enough. But by then, he had learned that although all women had sexual desires as did men, he also knew that, like his relationship with Marina, sometimes a non-sexual relationship with a woman was more important than a sexual one and, because of Brenda, this situation was one of those times. Besides, there were enough other potential sex partners out there if he had need of one.

One evening, a few weeks later, after supper, while Brenda was washing the dishes in the kitchen and Ian and her mother were having a cup of coffee together, Jan said "Ian, I have something to tell you. This city is no place to raise a child. I'm taking Brenda back to our hometown in Iowa to live."

"I understand," replied Ian. He'd thought the same thing might be best for Brenda the first night that he had met her. "I'm thinking of leaving the city myself. As far as I'm concerned cities this large are no place for me to live either."

"Why don't you come back to Iowa with us? I know that Brenda would want you to."

Ian laughed. "Don't you think that it would look kind of strange for a thirty-six-year-old divorcee returning to her home in Iowa with a sixteen-year-old daughter and a twenty-two-year-old single man? What would the neighbors say?"

Jan laughed. "I guess you're right. What was I thinking?" which was *We could get married, all go back to Iowa together, you get a job, we could raise Brenda together and live happily ever after* but didn't say so because she knew how unfair it would be to Ian who was just beginning his own young life -even if he were to say 'Yes' out of pity for Brenda and herself.

After Jan told her daughter, Brenda, that she was taking her back to Iowa, Brenda went to Ian privately the next day and said "Mom says we're going back to Iowa. Please come back with us."

"I can't for a number of reasons," Ian said -one of which was that he still hadn't found what he was looking for, whatever it was.

"But I love you, Ian"

"And I love you too, little sister," he said fondly.

"But I mean I really love you," Brenda said emphasizing the word 'really'

"I know," was all that Ian could say. How could he return the kind of love that he knew that Brenda thought she had for him? For a moment he regretted arousing the kinds of feelings that she now had for him but immediately dismissed the thought, knowing that had he not intervened in her life, she probably would have become another Sally -or worse!

"If you can't come to Iowa with us then please let me stay here with you," Brenda begged.

"You know that I can't let you do that. You're only sixteen."

"I know, but I love you so much. I'll do anything that you want me to do."

Ian thought for a moment.

"Do you really love me and will you do anything that I want you to do, Brenda?"

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Promise?"

"Promise!"

"Okay, here's what I want you to do. I want you to go back to Iowa with your mother, go back to school, go to college, graduate and get a good job. Have your mother give me your address and I'll contact you on your twenty-first birthday and if you still love me, I'll marry you. Fair enough?"

"Promise?"

"I promise," Ian said, knowing full-well that by the time Brenda was twenty-one, she would have got over the school-girl crush she had on him and would probably be engaged or married. *Hopefully the positive influence that I may have had on her will help her find the right guy.*

A few days later, Ian saw Brenda and her mother off at the local Greyhound bus stop.

"Goodbye, Ian," said Brenda's mother and shook his hand. "I'll never forget what you've done for Brenda."

"Goodbye, Jan. And thank you for allowing me to be a part of your family if only for a while."

Brenda stood by waiting to say goodbye to Ian privately. Jan got on the bus.

"Goodbye, Brenda," Ian said and held out his hand for her to shake.

Brenda ignored his outstretched hand and instead hugged him passionately, kissing him on the cheek and at the same time whispering into his ear "I love you."

"I'll see you in five years," Ian lied.

September 1966

Ian had left Detroit in late August and was now hitch-hiking across the United States. He was headed for San Francisco, California and had decided to travel via Arizona so that he could view the large meteorite crater about forty miles west of Winslow that Martha had described to him eight years before. He was now sitting in a small diner a few miles west of Thoreau on Highway I-40.

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"Why pick on me? I'm just an Indian!" the young Native-American said almost in tears. Ian looked up at the sound of the frightened voice. From where he sat in the roadside diner he saw an Indian youth crouched in the corner of a booth diagonally across from his. Above the youth, towered an enormous, fat white truck driver his fist raised as if to strike him.

Through the window of the diner, Ian had seen the truck driver pull up a few minutes before, waddle into the diner, a toothpick twitching from the corner of his mouth and gaze around the diner until his eyes had rested upon the young man. His eyes had taken on the cold stare of a snake focused on its prey. Slithering up to the young man, he had said something and made a jerking motion with his thumb. The Indian had responded and now the truck driver was threatening him.

Getting up from his seat, Ian went over to the booth in which the Indian youth was cowering "What seems to be the problem?" he inquired politely.

"This no-good Indian is sitting in my seat," the redneck said indignantly.

Ian glanced around the diner. The diner was nearly empty. What other patrons there were kept their eyes studiously on their meals in front of them. "There are all kinds of other seats available," he said, pointing to the ones available.

"Mind your own business," the truck driver snarled.

"This is my business," Ian replied quietly, emphasizing the word 'is' and looked directly into his eyes.

"What do you mean?" the bully said belligerently.

"I mean, leave him alone," Ian said evenly.

The truck driver sized him up and for a moment Ian thought that he might have to physically defend himself, not that he was concerned about that! But like most cowards who only pick fights with someone they know they can beat, the redneck turned pale, grunted "He's not worth it," and swaggered to another booth where he pretended indifference while stealing angry glances at Ian from time to time.

"Mind if I join you?" Ian asked the young man.

"Please do," the youth said with relief, welcoming at least temporary protection from his persecutor.

Ian sat down and held out his hand. "Hi. My name is Ian Campbell."

The young man took it, shyly. "Hi. My name's Lonan. My friends call me Lon. Do you live around here?"

"No, just passing through."

“I thought so, because you don’t see many white folks around here sticking their necks out for an Indian.”

“What’s his problem?” Ian asked, jerking his thumb towards the redneck.

“He has the same problem as most white people around here. He’s jealous.”

“What do you mean jealous?”

Lonan laughed sardonically. “Well, it seems that everything was okay when the white man took away all our land and stuck us on god-forsaken reservations a hundred years ago. And it seemed to be okay for them to literally ignore us and leave us to survive on our own the best we could during that time. But since some Indian tribes discovered coal, and uranium on their reservations a few years ago, acts of violence against all of us have suddenly begun to increase. I can only assume that now that some of us have a bit more money than some whites, they resent it.” Changing the subject and glancing out the window, Lonan said “I don’t see any wheels for you.” There were only two vehicles in the parking lot – the truck driver’s rig and Lonan’s old, beat-up red Ford pick-up truck.

“I’m hitch-hiking.”

“Where are you headed?”

“West. California, I guess.”

“Well, I’m headed in that direction. I’ll give you a lift as far as I go when you’re ready to go.”

Just then the door of the diner opened and in walked two truck drivers who could have been clones of the one that Ian had confronted. They waved to the one already there, waddled over to him and sat down opposite him. He leaned over and said something to them and gestured in Ian’s direction.

“Oh! Oh!” Ian said ominously. “I think I’m ready to go now. I’ll get the tab.”

Glancing at the trio, Lonan said “I think you’re right. I’ll meet you outside,” got up and headed for the men’s room.

Motioning to the waitress for the bill, Ian pretended to take his time checking the bill for accuracy, left some money on the table of the booth, picked up his knapsack and nonchalantly strolled outside, his heart racing. He didn’t mind taking on these guys one at a time, but he knew that they were not likely aficionados of the Marquess of Queensbury rules\*.

[\* The Marquess of Queensbury rules was a code of fair play in boxing published by Welsh sportsman named John Chambers and endorsed publicly by John Douglas, Marquess of Queensbury in 1865.]

The three rednecks watched Ian leave the diner and sat patiently waiting for the youth to come out of the washroom, so they could beat him up. After a minute or two, one of them got up, went over to the bathroom door and rattled the door handle. “Hurry up in there. I’ve got to take a piss,” he lied and winked knowingly at his companions.

But by then, Lonan had climbed out of the bathroom window, slipped around to the side of the restaurant where his truck was parked and motioned to

Ian who was standing at the front door of the diner waiting for him to come out, to get into the truck.

Relieved that his new-found friend had gotten out of the diner safely and that he would not have to go back in for him, Ian moved quickly to the truck and jumped into the front seat beside Lonan. Starting the truck as quietly as he could, Lonan put the truck into first gear and inched his way quietly across the parking lot towards the highway. Reaching the shoulder of the highway, he quickly put the truck into second followed by third gear, accelerating as he did so. The truck took off like a scared jack-rabbit with a screech of tires and in a cloud of dust. Ian looked into the rear-view mirror just in time to see the three rednecks spill out of the front of the restaurant and rush to one of the rigs.

“Oh! Oh!” Ian said for the second time in the last five minutes.

Lonan glanced into the mirror. “Don’t worry. They’ll never catch us now!”

Ian relaxed and leaned back in his seat “Whew! That was an interesting experience.”

“Yeah. We go through that a lot around here - unless we travel in groups of at least three. And we never let our women travel alone.”

“That’s too bad, but it’s all over now,” Ian said and leaned further back in his seat.

“At least for the time-being,” Lonan commented dryly and hunched further over the steering wheel.

Just then, one of the rigs that the rednecks had been driving loomed up over the hill behind them.

“Oh! Oh!” Ian said for the third time. “It looks as if we have company.”

“Not for long,” Lonan responded and accelerated.

But the rig behind them not only began to accelerate but also gain on them. After a few minutes of trying to outrace it, Lonan began to suddenly slow down.

“What are you doing?” Ian asked nervously. “If they catch us, they’ll kill us.”

“We’ll see about that.” The rig inched closer and closer.

“Speed up,” Ian commanded. But his companion paid no attention to him and slowed down even more.

“He’s going to rear-end us,” Ian warned. Again, Lonan slowed down. The rig behind them seemed to accelerate even more as it got closer and closer.

“For Christ sake, accelerate!” Ian shouted and was about to put his own foot on Lonan’s foot in order to force him to accelerate. The rig was no further than fifty feet behind them. But suddenly, Lonan slowed down completely and made a sudden left-hand turn off Highway I-40 and onto a dirt road which he drove down for about a hundred yards and stopped.

The rig which had been right behind the pickup truck was going too fast to make the sudden turn that Lonan had made and its momentum willed it to continue through the intersection. The driver of the rig had been so determined to force them off the road that when Lonan turned, the driver began to turn automatically also. Realizing his mistake at the last minute, he tried to apply his brakes, which was the worst thing that he could have done. The result of the driver’s combined efforts of turning and braking at the same time caused the cab of the truck to go onto the left shoulder of the road and the trailer to fish-tail and

begin to slide sideways down the highway until its momentum caused both the cab and trailer to overturn.

“Oh, my God!” Ian exclaimed.

“An old Indian trick,” Lonan grinned.

Just then the cab of the rig burst into flames. “We’ve got to help them,” cried Ian and began to get out of the truck.

“Fuck ‘em!” snarled Lonan, restarted the truck and continued to drive down the long narrow dirt road toward his destination.

Ian leaned back and realizing that they were definitely out of danger, relaxed. He knew that they could not be followed and was now able to look more closely at his companion for the first time.

Lonan’s features were typical of his race but less pronounced because of his young age. His hair was jet black and was cut in what would have described as a ‘page-boy’ style by white women. A sweatband of faded red cloth was wrapped around his head, keeping his hair in place. From the pictures that Ian had seen of Indians, Lonan’s bronze face had not yet aged enough to create the weathered leather look of the older men of that race, but his aquiline nose and straight thin lips lent the appearance of stoicism or perhaps reluctant acceptance that one saw in all of them. The slight obliqueness of his eyes betrayed his Asian ancestry, although they were more pointed than round due to the less prominence of the ‘Mongolian fold’\*. Ian also suspected that Lonan had a purple mark that looked like a bruise at the base of his spine as had Su-Ling, one of his conquests at university.

[ \*The ‘epicanthic fold’ is located in the corner of the eye nearest to the bridge of the nose. It is more pronounced in Asians, hence the non-medical term ‘Mongolian fold’.]

Ian looked with surprise at Lonan’s hands. Unlike his face which still had a youthful appearance to it, Lonan’s hands grasping the steering wheel were of a darker hue, wrinkled and rough-looking, with dirty purple-colored fingernails. His bare arms were muscular as was the rest of his body as evidenced by the small but wiry frame beneath his tee shirt. Ian surmised that Lonan was a laborer by trade and worked outdoors.

Lonan drove on, hunched over the steering of his truck, concentrating on the winding, rocky dirt road in front of them.

“Now that was an interesting experience,” Ian stated again in an attempt to initiate a conversation. “Where are we going?”

“Home,” replied Lonan laconically.

Ian looked around him. There were no houses in sight. The landscape looked quite barren to him. In some places, it was littered entirely with stony soil. In other places, it was almost totally sand with huge outcrops of rock. Where possible, low sagebrush bushes grew scattered amongst the rocks. Occasionally, there were areas of brown, dry grass on which some animals, if they existed, could feed. In the distance were low shrub-covered hills and a higher flat tableland – the remnant of an ancient volcano.

“Uh, do you live around here?” Ian ventured to say as Lonan continued to wind his way through the wide, low passages between the rocky hills. *How*

*could anyone live in this god-forsaken country?* he wondered.

“No, this is Navajo land,” Lonan snorted contemptuously.

Ian frowned. He had read about the Navajo nation somewhere and knew that they inhabited parts of the south-western United States. He had assumed that Lonan was Navajo. “Aren’t you Navajo?”

“No, I’m Zuni,” Lonan said proudly.

“Zuni? I’ve heard of Navajo, Hopi and Apache Indians before but I’ve never heard of Zuni Indians. I thought that there were only Navajo Indians around here.”

“No,” replied Lonan. “The only reason that most people think that there are only Navajo Indians around here is because they own most of the bloody land! But within a radius of one hundred miles of where we are right now there are at least eight distinct Native American tribes living on at least twelve Indian reservations. The Navajo reservation and the Zuni reservation on which I live are only two of them.”

“Holy cow!” exclaimed Ian. “Why so many?”

“Probably for three reasons. To begin with, not all Indians in the area come from the same tribes and I guess that it didn’t make sense for the U.S. government to put different distinct tribes with different languages and different religions on the same reservation. That would have created chaos if not outright warfare between tribes that had been traditional enemies. I think that another reason for so many reservations is because as the American government defeated each tribe of Indians –and don’t forget it took them years to do so - it created regional reservations for that tribe –and sometimes even when there was already a reservation for that tribe. In my opinion, the third and final reason that the American government created so many reservations for even the same tribes is because in that way they didn’t have to give each tribe much land and could more easily control each of them.”

*Kind of like the Jewish ghettos in Europe under the Nazis,* Ian mused, but said nothing to Lonan. “I must admit that I know very little about Native American history. Tell me more, Lonan,” Ian said with interest. By the looks of the barren wasteland around them, they probably had a long ride ahead of them before they would reach any habitation.

Lonan glanced at Ian and sensed his sincerity. The fact that Ian had also rescued him from the redneck convinced him. “Sure. But please call me Lon. Where would you like me to begin?”

“How much farther do we have to go?”

“Oh, about twenty more miles.”

“That far?”

“Yes, that’s where I live and you’ll need a place to stay for a while until that little episode at the highway blows over.”

Ian saw that he did not have much choice but to go with Lon. “From the beginning then.” *That should put in some time.*

“Well,” Lon began, “no one knows the exact origin of each of the Indian tribes of this area, but it’s believed that the ancestors of all of the Indians of North and South America migrated to North America from Asia thousands of years ago across a land bridge between Alaska and Asia.” He then continued to



tell Ian what he knew about the history of the Zuni. In a little while, Lonan rounded a canyon wall. In front of them was a collection of old adobe buildings interspersed with a few flat-roofed concrete block houses and old weather-beaten trailers.

Lonan pulled up in front one of the newer-looking two-story concrete block houses. A middle-aged man was standing in the yard in front of the house watering a small garden. He was dressed in the conventional dress of most rural Americans living in the southwest which was denim jeans, but wore a grey tee-shirt which said 'Proud to Be Zuni' and a black Stetson.

"Hi, pop. I want you to meet a friend of mine –Ian"

"Hi." Ian said and held out his hand.

Lon's father held out his hand politely to Ian but looked a little quizzically at his son. His son knew that white people were not welcome on the reservation and it was highly unusual for him to bring one home with him, especially considering Lon's own hatred of them. "Hello," he said, shaking Ian's hand. "My name is Lusio. Welcome. Any friend of Lon is a friend of mine."

"Thanks."

"I think Ian's going to be staying with us for a little while," said Lon, looking at Ian for approval who nodded his head in agreement. He didn't relish the idea of leaving the safety of the reservation too soon.

"Well, then come on up to the house," said Lusio. Again, he looked at Lon questioningly. While Ian had his back to them getting his knapsack out of the back of Lonan's truck, Lon surreptitiously raised his forefinger to his lip as if to say to his father 'Don't ask any questions.' Lusio nodded. As far as he was concerned Lon must have had a good reason for inviting a white man to stay with them.

Following Lon and Lusio up to their house, Ian looked around. There really wasn't much to see. Lusio's flat-roofed two-story concrete block houses was an exception to the many partially abandoned one-story adobe houses lining both sides of a dirt road also lined with hydro poles. None of the properties were fenced. Almost all of the occupied houses had a small vegetable garden in front of them. Behind the houses lay a scrubland sparse of grass interspersed with tumbleweed but not that far away Ian could see a river with verdant banks of small trees on both banks of it.

Entering their house, Lusio and Lon removed their shoes. Ian did likewise, hoping that they would not notice the hole in the toe of one of his socks. He immediately found it much cooler inside the house as a result of the thick concrete block walls of the building having trapped the cool air from the previous evening. The brown clay tile floor felt cool to his feet. The first room that they entered was the kitchen and included a white electric stove, a white kitchen sink embedded in a dark wood counter with matching cabinets installed on both sides of the small calico-curtained window that looked out over the garden. The rest of the kitchen furniture consisted of a white refrigerator, a long ponderosa-pine wooden table and six rough-hewn chairs made from cottonwood. A pleasant looking middle-aged native woman stood in front of the stove cooking something.

"This is my wife, Lucita," Lusio said to Ian, gesturing to her as he

introduced her to him. Lucita looked up, smiled shyly, nodded, dropped her eyes and returned to stirring the pot. "My daughter Nona will be home soon. In the meantime, come into the living room," he continued, pushing a thick woven blanket of Indian design away from the wall, exposing an open doorway behind it.

Following Lusio with Lon behind him, Ian entered a very large living room. It was even cooler in there than in the kitchen, but its brown tile floor was covered by woven throw-rugs of Indian design. All the walls had been thinly plastered with stucco and whitewashed which brightened the room considerably when illuminated by the light coming through a large double-glazed east-facing bay window. A walnut colored stairway at one end of the room led to the upstairs bedrooms and a stone fireplace, with its customary wooden mantle, was built into the wall at the other end of the room. Two earth-colored fabric covered sofas and three similarly covered easy-chairs were scattered about the room. Lusio motioned to one of the easy-chairs for Ian to sit in. "Please sit down," he said.

Ian had no sooner sat down when Nona suddenly walked into the living room but stopped abruptly when she saw him. Ian jumped to his feet immediately. *God, she's beautiful!* was the first thing that entered his head as soon as he saw her. And she was! Her jet-black hair was pulled back tightly against the sides of her bronze colored face into a ponytail which accentuated her high cheekbones and aquiline nose. Although her lips were thinner than those of most of the Caucasian women that Ian had known, nevertheless they were still as inviting because of the dark crimson colored lipstick that she had applied to them. She wore a woman's business suit of matching grey top and skirt which ended at the knees, showing off her beautiful bronze legs. Her black eyes stared boldly at him.

Lon got up from the sofa on which he was sitting and said "Ian, I want you to meet my older sister, Nona."

"Hhhhow do you do," stammered Ian and dropped his eyes. It was the first time that he had ever been embarrassed when meeting a young woman. But her sudden entrance coupled with her beauty had taken him by surprise.

Nona appeared not to notice his embarrassment and replied "Hi. Any friend of Lon's is a friend of mine," but stole the same quizzical glance at Lon as had her father. Lon responded with a furtive hand signal for her to say no more. Ian continued to stand in awed silence waiting for someone to say something.

Finally, Nona said, "Nice to have met you Ian," turned and went up the stairs at the end of the room, presumably to her bedroom on the second floor. Ian sat down. By supertime, he had learned that Lon's father was a teacher in the local Zuni composite school, that Lon worked for a local contractor and that Nona, who had not come back downstairs, worked in the budding Zuni tourist industry. Ian told them very little about his life, other than that he had grown up in Bay's End, had attended school there, had gone on to university and dropped out when a friend of his died.

During supper, in addition to carrying on conversations with the rest of the family, Ian managed to get enough courage to ask Nona questions about her tourism job during which she explained to him that although her Zuni people would have preferred to remain isolated from white society, it was obvious that

in order for them to survive economically, it was imperative that they attract white capital but with as little harm as possible to the Zuni traditional way of life. "Zuniland," she explained, "is one of the smallest Indian reservations in the United States and has only an area of about 725 square miles and a total population of about 3000 persons. Each year more and more young people must leave the reservation to find jobs and very few ever return. If that trend continues we will eventually become extinct as a race. On the other hand, if we encourage industrial development, then we risk mongrelizing our race and destroying our traditional way of life. Our strategy then, is to discourage the exploitation of our natural resources such as uranium and coal mining and the resultant destruction of our culture and environment and instead focus on the development of tourism, such as the sale of Zuni artifacts, tourist accommodation, and guided tours of our historic pueblos. In this way, the white people come, visit us for a while, spend money and then leave us alone to continue our own way of life."

During the following week, while Lon, Lusio and Nona were at work during the day, Ian read as much as he could about Zuni history and culture from the books that Lusio gave to him to read and in the evenings queried Lusio about anything that he didn't understand or was of interest to him. Some of the things that he was to learn was that the Zuni people had lived in that area for at least three thousand years and had originally been nomadic hunters and gatherers and eventually farmers after corn had been introduced, probably from Mexico. By 750 CE, the Zuni farmers had begun living together in attached communal adobe or stone structures, called pueblos, which were often built multistoried and on terraced cliff walls for defense purposes. Each of these pueblos contained circular covered communal *kivas* in which their corn was stored. By about 1000 CE, a 'village of the great kiva' had been built which housed at least 100 people and by the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Zuni inhabited about a dozen pueblos consisting of between 100 to 1000 rooms each. But by 1400 CE, all of these pueblos, except one had been abandoned and in spite of nine additional pueblos being constructed after that, by 1650 CE, there were only a total of six active Zuni pueblo villages left.

When asked about the ebb and flow of the construction of these pueblos, Lusio explained. "Well, contrary to popular European belief, the North American Indian never was 'a noble savage' living in complete harmony with his environment. That misconception is not only grounded in the biblical myth in which Adam and Eve were supposed to have lived in some kind of paradise, but is also based on the belief by some intellectuals that somehow smaller and less complex societies closest to nature, are idyllic. That's not true! Man is a living organism and like all living organisms he attempts to control his environment in order to survive. The only difference between European and American Indian life was that the Indians of the Americas, for the most part, had access to relatively unlimited natural resources because of their low population per square mile, while European centers of commerce were relatively overcrowded with limited necessities of life for some people, which led to the consequences of crime, poverty and conflict with neighboring countries. If European intellectuals had wanted to see examples of so-called 'noble savages' in harmony with their environment, it would have been better had they visited their own local farms

with their relatively advanced technology. Don't kid yourself, Ian. Man has always been at the mercy of his environment. Sometimes he has no control over his environment such as in the case of drought due to climate change. Sometimes he's the victim of himself when he depletes his surrounding resources due to overpopulation and is forced to move to where there are more resources. And of course, there is the inevitable conflict with other humans seeking the same resources for the same reasons. The story of our peoples' survival is reflected in the locations of our ancient pueblos, which I'll show you some weekend."

True to his word, one Saturday, Lon and Lusio drove Ian around, to show him the ruins of an abandoned Zuni pueblo and *kiva* that was located about seventeen miles northeast of Zuni Pueblo, the main town of 'Zuniland' and that evening, Lusio related to him, with slides, the dramatic story of the Verde Mesa and Chaco Canyon pueblos and their Anasazi ancestors who lived there.

Although Ian tried to spend as much time as possible with Lon, who began referring to him as *babba* [Zuni man's 'older brother'], he tried to avoid Nona as much as possible. But one Saturday when Lusio was busy with something else and Lon was working overtime, Nona asked Ian if he would like to accompany her into the town of Zuni Pueblo to buy groceries. This time she was dressed in tight-fitting denim jeans, a loose plaid work-shirt open at the neck and Indian moccasins.

When Ian stammered a reply, "Nnno thank you," Nona laughingly replied "Why not, Ian? Are you afraid of me?"

He reddened. "Nnno, it's not that, Nona. It's just that when I'm around you I wouldn't want to say or do anything that might offend you, your father or your brother."

"You mean like trying to seduce me?"

Ian hesitated and then admitted. "Well, yes. I find you so attractive. I've never seen anyone so beautiful."

Nona laughed. "Normally, flattery will get you everywhere with a Zuni maiden, Ian, but in this case, you don't have to worry about it. You're not my type."

"Oh," Ian said a bit dejectedly but at the same time relieved. He had always been used to women being attracted to him and was afraid that Nona might fall in love with him, as had Brenda, which would have complicated matters considerably.

"Not that you're not good-looking in your own way," Nona added quickly in an attempt to mollify him. "And I'm sure that you will have no difficulty with finding the right person when the time comes, but I intend to marry someone Zuni."

"Why Zuni?" Ian asked defensively.

"To preserve our race and our identity," Nona said emphatically.

"What if you don't love him?"

"I will search until I do find a Zuni man to love."

"And if you don't?"

"If I don't find a Zuni man to love by the time that I'm thirty, then I'll marry or live with a Zuni man who I do not love and will have his children. People in other cultures marry people that they don't love and their marriages

seem to work out okay.”

“I suppose so, Nona. But I think that in those societies the man is considered to be boss of the house and because the wife depends on him, he is able to dominate her.”

“That may be so in some cultures Ian, but in my household, I intend to be the dominant partner in any relationship that I have with a man because our culture is matriarchal. You see, in Zuni society, a woman gets to decide who she’s going to marry or live with, as long as he is from outside her clan. We don’t even have to get married if we don’t want to because none of our children would be considered to be illegitimate. Also, any wealth that is accumulated during a couple’s time together – including a house, belongs to the woman. If a woman wishes to divorce or separate from her husband or lover, for any reason, all she has to do is to put all of his personal belongings out on the doorstep so that when he comes home he discovers that he is no longer wanted.”

“What about the husband or lover? Can’t he legally sue for part of the property that a couple has accumulated while together?”

“Not in Zuni society. Because if he does, then the shame associated with it would be greater than any legal results that might be to his advantage.”

“What about any children that they might have?”

“The children stay with the mother because they belong to the same clan as she does.”

“Sounds like an interesting arrangement, Nona. I hope that it works for you. But please, please do me a favor.”

“What is it?”

“Try to find someone to love and be loved by. I can’t imagine you being married to someone who doesn’t love you or you them.”

“Good advice. I’ll keep that in mind,” Nona laughed, “But you know, although Zuni society is matriarchal, we Zuni women are not entirely devoid of romantic feelings,” and gave Ian an affectionate hug. After that, she always referred to him as *hanni* [Zuni woman’s ‘brother’]

While living in ‘Zuniland’, as Nona and her family insisted on calling it to emphasize Zuni nationhood, Ian also had the opportunity to observe, although not participate in, which was forbidden, some Zuni religious ceremonies. By questioning Lon after he watched the ceremonies in which Lon participated, Ian was able to get some idea what the Zuni religion was all about. As Lon explained it to him, the original goal of Zuni religion was to not only live in harmony with nature but with each other as well. This was accomplished by becoming aware of (at least in their own minds) over a hundred *kachina* or supernatural beings whose role was to mediate on behalf of them with the forces of nature. These supernatural beings or *kachinas* are considered to be the deceased ancestors of the Zuni themselves and are believed to live at Sacred Lake, a lagoon at the juncture of the Zuni and Little Colorado rivers southwest of Zuni Pueblo. Although these are not the only spirits that the Zuni have, they are the most popular because a lot of them are identified with water, especially rain.\*

[ \*For example, two of the major gods that the Zuni have are ‘Father Sun’ and ‘Mother Earth’.]

Each *kachina* is personified by the wearing of a unique *kachina mask* by Zuni males during ceremonial dances. Although Ian didn't understand the exact relationship, if any, that each *kachina* had to other *kachinas*, it appeared to him that all *kachina* could be divided into six kinds of individuals and three kinds of group dancers. The six kinds of *kachina individuals* seemed to be associated with the social behavior of individuals in Zuni society and the three *kachina groups*, such as the Rain dancers, the Hunter dancers and the Warrior dancers appeared to be associated exclusively with the historic activities of agriculture, hunting and warfare.

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But it was approaching winter now, and the *Shalako*\* ceremony which was the most important Zuni ceremony of the year and that Lon wanted Ian to see would not take place until the first of December.

[ \*The *Shálako* is a sacred ceremony, enacted publicly for the purposes of invoking divine blessings on newly built houses and giving thanks to the gods for the harvests of the year.]

And as much as he cared for and respected his new-found friends, Ian felt that it was time for him to move on. In spite of Lon's encouragement to stay and become part of the community, Ian knew in his heart that a permanent Zuni way of life was not for him. Although he had learned a lot about their culture and enjoyed the opportunity to escape the real world long enough to try to piece part of his own life back together, he knew that the Zuni way of life was doomed through the process of acculturation\*.

[ \*Acculturation: the process by which a dominant culture absorbs a weaker one.]

The real answer to what he was looking for was still out there somewhere. When he told Lon that he felt it was time to leave the reservation, Lon's only remark had been "I understand." The following morning, he had driven Ian wordlessly, past the burned-out semi on Highway I-40 to the nearest bus stop, waited silently until the bus came and when it did, thanked Ian for saving his life, politely said goodbye, shook Ian's hand, got back into his truck, drove around the corner out of sight of the bus, stopped his vehicle and wiped tears from his once stoic face.

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“Ken Rinpoche,” Ian said, “Tell me more about Buddhism.”

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While Ian was at university, Marina had mentioned the book, 'Siddhartha' by Herman Hesse, during one of her lectures and although Buddhism was not one of the philosophies that the students in her class were studying, he had read the novel and decided to learn more about Buddhist philosophy at some time in the future. After Marina died, Ian's interest in European philosophers no longer seemed to be important and when the use of drugs and his investigation into the Zuni religion failed to help him find the answer to whatever it was he was looking for, he decided to investigate Buddhism as a means to that end. As far as he was concerned, all other religions with their superstitious nonsense were non-starters. After leaving the Zuni reservation, he had skipped visiting the Winslow meteor crater as he had originally intended and had boarded the next bus heading for California instead of hitchhiking, for fear that the truck drivers that Lon and he had escaped from, if they were still alive, might see him on the highway and kill him. Upon arriving in San Francisco, he had located the nearest *ashram* (Buddhist religious retreat). It was located in the seediest part of the city and signs of urban decay was evident everywhere around it. Many of the stores in the area were closed and had been for some time as indicated by their empty dirty windows and shabby exteriors. The only real sign of human activity seemed to be the plethora of apparent homeless people who sat in front of the empty stores with all of their worldly belongings piled into shopping carts pilfered from a nearby supermarket.

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“Well, to begin with,” replied the abbot, “perhaps I should tell you how Buddhism began before I tell you what it's all about.” He began. “Because the origin of Hinduism predates Buddhism, it can be said that the roots of Buddhism in India lie in Hinduism. It is believed that Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was born in Nepal sometime between 563 and 480 BCE, taught in the eastern parts of India of Magadha and Kosala, and died between 483 and 400 BCE. As a youth, he was probably a practicing Hindu of the upper or *Brahmin* class. Although there are some similarities between Hinduism and Buddhism, the main difference between the two is that while both religions recognize that there is suffering during the life of human beings, Hindus believe that these sufferings are as a result of bad behavior in previous lives which can only be corrected by good behavior in successive lives until one eventually reaches *moksha* (release of the recycle of birth and hence suffering), while Siddhartha believed that *nirvana* (the cessation of suffering) could be achieved in one's lifetime by following what he referred to as ‘Four Noble Truths’ and ‘The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment’. Over time, he preached these beliefs and eventually

became known as a *Buddha* or 'enlightened one', by his followers who became known as Buddhists." The abbot then went on to describe to Ian, some of the other similarities and differences between Hinduism and Buddhism.

When Ian expressed interest in learning more about Buddhism and stated that perhaps he should go to India for that purpose, Ken Rinpoche suggested that he spend some time in an American *ashram* first and if still interested in Buddhism after six months then go to India. "After all," he explained, "Not only do we teach the same principles of Buddhism here as they do in India, but we also have enough misery here in the United States from which to draw enough examples of suffering. However, in all honesty," he added, "unlike other sects of Buddhism, we have eliminated from our American model a lot of rituals that we do not believe are necessary in order to follow 'The Four Noble Truths' and 'The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment'."

"Sort of like a Volkswagen and not a Cadillac?" suggested Ian

"Exactly. A Cadillac has a lot more 'bells, lights and whistles' than a Volkswagen, but both automobiles get you to where you want to go. Why don't you talk to some other members of our *ashram* before you decide to stay here or go to India. If you decide to stay, we will begin your orientation classes tomorrow."

Ian spent the rest of the day investigating his surroundings and speaking to other members of the *ashram* about their satisfaction or lack thereof with being there.

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The following morning, Ian was awakened at 6:00 a.m. by Vidya Lama, the monk who was assigned to him as his *guru* (teacher). It was just becoming light and the surrounding neighborhood was just beginning to stir. The night before, Ian had decided to stay, had been assigned his own cell, had his face and head shaved and had been given the customary maroon colored *kasaya* (robe) of novice monks of this particular *ashram* to wear.

"Sorry to have awakened you so early on the first day toward your enlightenment," Vidya Lama joked. "but in India you would have been up by 4:00 a.m. Here we are more practical and try to fit our daily schedule into the rhythm of the world around us," emphasizing the word 'us'. "Nevertheless, the process of becoming a Buddhist here," he went on, "is still very structured because specific structure is the first step in one's life toward self-discipline. So, what you will experience today is pretty well what you will be experiencing each day for as long as you are here. Once you leave here, you can restructure your own daily schedule depending on the rhythm of your own surroundings, and hopefully it will include all of the essentials of Buddhism that you learn here."

Vidya Lama continued. "To begin with, the first thing that each practicing Buddhist does here when he or she arises in the morning is to meditate and chant prayers for a total of one hour. I will be teaching you how to do that later."

"Don't we have breakfast first?" Ian asked, his stomach growling from not having been given enough food for supper the night before and having been forbidden to consume anything but water afterwards.

"No, because it is important that the body not be satiated when meditating



or chanting because when satiated, the body transfers blood from the brain to the stomach to digest food with the result that the brain is not as alert as it might otherwise be.” Vidya Lama then took Ian to his own cell where he demonstrated to him how he was to meditate and chant once he received further training.

When Vidya Lama finished his own morning exercises, he said “If we were living in parts of Asia, the next thing we would do in the morning would be to go barefoot into the community and from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. beg for food. But in our *ashram*, instead of going barefoot, we wear sandals and instead of begging for food during the time reserved for begging we do good works, such as serving breakfast from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. in free food kitchens to people living on the street. I’ll now take you to one of our free food kitchens.”

Again, Ian inquired hungrily “Don’t we eat breakfast first?”

“No! And we do not to eat any food while we are at the food kitchen.”

“Why not?”

“Because it is important that when we feed the poor we are aware of their suffering at that moment and it’s pretty hard to appreciate the suffering of the hungry on a full stomach. And also as a Buddhist, you must learn to overcome not your need for food, but your desire for food.”

Ian and his mentor walked to the nearby free food mission where they assisted their Christian counterparts who ran the mission, to prepare and serve breakfast. Ian watched hungrily while the denizens around him ate greedily. His mentor moved silently from table to table in his saffron-colored robe from patron to patron quietly refilling their coffee cups and from time to time resting his hand on the person’s shoulder in a loving and reassuring manner. He showed no signs of being hungry himself.

At 9:00 a.m. Vidya Lama signaled to Ian that it was time to go. On the way back to the *ashram*, Ian asked him “Weren’t you as hungry as I was, watching all those people eat?”

“No”

“Venerable Vidya Lama, may I inquire why not?” Ian asked respectfully.

Vidya Lama smiled “Because I was thinking of them, not myself.”

After eating their own breakfast, a little after 9:00 a.m. at the *ashram* during which all members ate breakfast together and a collective prayer said for world peace, each novice retired to their own cell with their *guru* to begin their lessons, while the regular monks went about following their own schedule for the day. Ian and Vidya Lama went to Ian’s cell.

After they both made themselves as comfortable as they could on the two simple wooden chairs there, Vidya Lama began his lesson: “As Ken Rinpoche told you yesterday, Ian, it is believed that Siddhartha was a wealthy Hindu prince living in India about 470 BCE who in spite of his wealth was moved by the physical and mental suffering of the people around him. As Ken Rinpoche also told you, the Hindu religion believed then, and still does, in reincarnation and that all suffering by human beings was a result of their bad behavior in previous lives which can only be ameliorated by progressively good behavior in successive lives until one reaches *moksha*, that is, liberation from the cycle of birth and death and therefore suffering. Although Siddhartha believed that physical suffering, such as illness, was part of our physical world over which we

have no control, he believed that cessation of at least mental suffering, *nirvana*, should be able to be achieved in one's own lifetime if one accepted his belief in 'The Four Noble Truths' and followed his 'Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment'. As a result of these beliefs, Siddhartha renounced his own title and wealth, became a *samana* or ascetic and roamed India sharing his ideas with anyone who would listen to him. In time, he accumulated followers, for whom his ideas made sense, and who began to refer to him as a *Buddha* or 'enlightened one'. Eventually, Siddhartha became known as the man 'Buddha' and his followers became known as Buddhists. And, as they say, 'the rest is history.'"

"Yes, I read Hesse's novel and know all that, but what are 'The Four Noble Truths' and 'The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment' that you mentioned?"

"I was getting to that because the whole success of reaching the goal of Buddhism which is *nirvana*, that is, the cessation of mental suffering, depends upon first believing 'The Four Noble Truths' and then following 'The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment' diligently. I will explain to you 'The Four Noble Truths' first, because without believing in them as being true or self-evident, 'The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment' that depends upon them would be meaningless. Therefore, let me first explain each of the 'Four Noble Truths' before moving on to 'The Eight-Fold Path to Enlightenment'.

"The First Noble Truth states that we cannot avoid the truth that life is imperfect and unsatisfactory and that 'suffering' or *dukkha* is obvious as a result.

"The Second Noble Truth states that this suffering is caused not only by physical suffering, such as illness and pain but is also caused by mental suffering such as worry, greed, hate, grief, anxiety, and a longing to have things that we can't always have such as good health, physical pleasure, and wealth.

"The Third Noble Truth states that although we cannot eliminate physical suffering there is a possibility that we may be able to lessen it as well as eliminate all mental suffering and replace it permanently with only positive thoughts and thereby achieve *nirvana*, that is, the cessation of mental suffering.

"The Fourth Noble Truth concludes that one can reach *nirvana* by following the 'Eight-fold Path of Enlightenment' as did Siddhartha. What do you think of what I've said so far?"

"Well..." Ian hesitated. "The first two Noble Truths seem to be logical enough, but I'm not too sure that the Third Noble Truth is possible. But 'The Eight-fold Path of Enlightenment', whatever it is, seemed to work for Buddha and I guess the only way to find out if it works for me is to test his hypothesis by trying the experiment. And if all that fails to make me feel better, I guess I could blow my brains out," he joked.

"I don't think that's going to be necessary," laughed Vidya Lama. "I'll meet you in your cell after lunch at 1:00 p.m. to describe to you the 'Eight-fold Path of Enlightenment'. In the meantime, until lunch, why don't you rest here and think about what I've told you, so far, about Buddhism."

At 12:00 noon, after a communal prayer chant\* at the food table, Ian shared in the Buddhist rule of non-violence to all creatures by excluding any meat, dairy or eggs. Instead his meal was all vegetarian consisting of lots of lentils, beans, soups, salads, and other vegetable dishes, washed down with tea.

[ \*'Wisely reflecting, I use this food not for fun, not for pleasure, not for fattening, not for beautification, but only for the maintenance and nourishment of this body, for keeping it healthy, for helping with the Spiritual Life. Thinking thus, I will allay hunger without overeating, so that I may continue to live blamelessly and at ease. ']

After lunch, Ian returned to his cell.

At exactly 1:00 p.m., Vidya Lama went to Ian's cell. "Good afternoon. I see that you haven't blown your brains out yet," he laughed.

"I thought that I would wait to decide until after I hear what you have to say this afternoon," Ian quipped.

Vidya Lama smiled. "Touche! But before I begin to describe to you Buddhism's 'Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment', I want to say that I noticed this morning that you seemed to have had some reservation about The Third Noble Truth that we talked about. So, before I begin, I want to share with you the following quotation by Buddha from his instruction to the people of Kalamas in the 'Kalama Sutta'" From a book that he held in his hand, he read:

'It is proper for you Kalamas, to doubt, to be uncertain; uncertainty has arisen in you about what is doubtful. Come, Kalamas. Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher. Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are bad; these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill, abandon them.'

"So, I want you to know, Ian, that Buddhism makes no attempt to brainwash its followers as do some other religions, because what Buddha himself is saying here is that you don't have to accept everything that he says, or you read, or are told about Buddhism and even may abandon it if you think that it leads to harm yourself or anyone else. Also, you should be aware that Buddha never claimed to be a god or even omniscient\* [\*all-knowledgeable]. It was only centuries later that his followers began to deify him. All we ask is that you keep an open mind about his teachings and follow 'The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment' here for a while at the end of which time you may decide to continue to follow Buddhism or abandon it."

"That sounds fair to me. Let's give it a shot. I've got nothing to lose."

"Great! Thanks, Ian. So, let's begin. 'The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment' has eight distinct components to it that one must adhere to if one is to follow Buddhism and become at least enlightened, even if one never reaches total *nirvana*." Handing Ian a single sheet of paper, Vidya Lama said, "Here's a list of the eight goals of 'The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment' that I am going to describe to you so that you can see the relationships of them as I go along. These eight requirements are also sometimes referred to as 'The Middle Way', but I still prefer to call them 'The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment' to constantly remind myself that, in Buddhism, there are really only eight steps required to follow to reach enlightenment. Now, the first step in following the Eight-fold Path is called 'Right Understanding' and requires that one accept 'The

Four Noble Truths' as well as study the actual words of Buddha in order to understand what he means by 'Right Understanding'. The second step in the Eight-fold Path is called 'Right Intention' and requires a commitment to develop the right attitude towards following the other steps in the path. A third step in the Eight-fold Path is to develop 'Right Speech'. By that we mean speaking, truthfully, avoiding slander, gossip and abusive language. Step four is called 'Right Action' and by that we mean behaving peacefully and harmoniously, refraining from stealing, killing and over-indulgence in physical pleasure. The fifth step is called 'Right Livelihood' and requires that one avoid making a living in ways that cause harm to animals and people such as killing them, exploiting them, or even trading in products, such as weapons or intoxicants, that could harm animals or people. The last three components of The Eight-fold Step involve meditation. They are; step six which is called 'Right Effort' by which one is to remove negative thoughts from the mind and replace them with permanent positive ones; step seven is called 'Right Mindfulness', which is developing awareness of the body, its sensations and state of mind, and finally step eight which is called 'Right Concentration' by which one develops the mental focus necessary to achieve and reinforce the other steps. If one can achieve perfection in all of the Eight-fold Steps towards enlightenment then they are considered to have reached *nirvana*. Are there any questions so far?"

"No. The process sounds pretty simple to me."

"Knowing what the steps of 'The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment' are is very, very simple, but following them successfully is very, very difficult! What I suggest to you, Ian, is that you post the outline of the Eight-fold Steps to Enlightenment that I just gave to you on the back of your cell door, so that you can read them quickly each time you leave your cell and are reminded of what would be expected of you as a Buddhist. For the next few months, we will cover each of these steps in detail by having you read Buddhist literature related to each step and you and I discussing it together afterwards. You may also discuss your Buddhist readings with other novices and monks but please do not discuss your personal life with anyone because we want you to avoid thinking of the past and instead, only concentrate on the 'the eternal now'. As well, there are Buddhist-related activities such as prayers and meditation exercises that you will learn to participate in. We do not eat again today until 6:00 p.m. and what I would like you to do between now and then is to help the cook prepare supper. But, remember no snacking before then."

At 6:00 p.m. Ian participated in a light snack of fruit with everyone else, followed by an hour of prayer and meditation after which all the novices retired to their cells to study. At 10:00 p.m. all the lights in the *ashram* were turned off and everyone was expected to go to sleep so that their minds would be refreshed for the next day.

For the next six months, Ian rigorously followed the daily schedule of the *ashram* including participating in its prayer and meditation exercises. After supper, Vidya Lama would assign to him the English translations of one of the *suttas* (teachings) of Buddha for him to read and the following day discuss its relationship to one or more of the Eight-fold Steps to Enlightenment with him.

One evening while reading one of Buddha's *suttas*, Ian's eyes rested upon

the following passage:

“And whosoever, Ananda, either now or after I am dead, shall be a lamp unto themselves, and a refuge unto themselves, shall betake themselves to no external refuge, but holding fast to the truth as their lamp, and holding fast as their refuge to the truth, shall look not for refuge to any one besides themselves...”

Ian thought about what he had read for a long time, what he had learned about Buddhism, and about his entire life so far. Closing the book of *suttas* that he had been reading, he retrieved from his knapsack the letter that Marina had written to him just before she died and read it again for the first time since he had dropped out of university. The following morning, he spoke to Ken Rinpoche.

“Venerable Ken Rinpoche, it is time for me to leave your *ashram*.”

“Respectfully, may I ask why?”

Ian described to the abbot what he had read the night before and added, “I honestly don’t think that I can find what I am looking for by remaining forever in a Buddhist monastery as do some Buddhist monks. I think that I need to return to the real world and become part of it in order to find what I am looking for.”

“What are you looking for?”

“I don’t know, but I will know when I find it.”

“How will you know when you find it?”

“I will know that I have found it when my mental suffering ends. In the meantime, I will continue to follow ‘The Eight-fold Path to Enlightenment’ in the hope that it will assist me in my search to end whatever it is that is making me unhappy.”

“Well argued, Ian. It might surprise you to know Buddha himself did not hide himself in some remote monastery as do some Buddhists, but achieved enlightenment while he was still in the real world, albeit only as an observer. I think that you have learned enough here to potentially be able to do the same. Goodbye and good luck.”

July 1967- May 1969

Ian had gone back to university (the University of California, Berkeley), using funds from the sale of his grandfather's farm\*, was majoring in quantum physics and at present had tentatively booked online time to use the university's new Cray CDC 76600 computer located in the Radiation Laboratory.

[ \*While living in the Buddhist *ashram*, Ian had sold the farm that he had inherited from his grandfather for half the market value to his grandfather's hired hand, Harold, who had been renting it, and paid back the scholarship for his incomplete year at university.]

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"The purpose of my experiment is to try to mathematically recreate the origin of the universe using our Cray supercomputer," Ian said to his advisor, Professor Schmitt.

"Sounds like an interesting idea for your thesis, Ian. It would certainly be a first. Tell me more about your idea."

"Well, as you know, the prevailing theory of the origin of the universe is that about 10 billion to 20 billion years ago – I estimate 18.5 billion - a quantum fluctuation or so-called 'big bang', allowed all the universe's known matter and energy—even space and time themselves—to appear from some unknown source. The evidence for such an explosive origin seems to be supported by the fact that other galaxies appear to be moving away from our own and each other in all directions and the further away they are, the faster they seem to be moving."

"Yes, I know that," Professor Schmitt interjected impatiently, "and originally the entire content of the universe was supposedly encapsulated into a hot dense mass less than the size of a single proton. And within trillionths of a second after the big bang, the primary building blocks of the universe were created and as the universe expanded, more diverse kinds of particles, such as atoms, began to form which eventually condensed into the universe of planets, stars and galaxies as we know it. But cut to the chase! Tell me how you intend to go about mathematically recreating the 'big bang' using a computer."

"Well, while it might be possible to mathematically recreate the 'big bang' manually on paper, and I understand that two mathematicians are attempting to do so at present, I think that it would be much too difficult for them to be successful. It would be much more accurate and faster if one were to use our new supercomputer to model the universe instead."

"Yes, I can see why one would probably need a supercomputer to perform all of the complex mathematical calculations that would be required to process all the data that would need to be fed into a computer to create a fairly accurate model of the universe. But of course, the data would have to be very accurate in the first place – 'Garbage in -Garbage out' you know."

"That's right sir. But the advantage of using a computer model to do the mathematics is that the program doing the calculations can be fine-tuned to satisfy the data and the data can also be carefully tweaked to satisfy the program."

“Yes, but what would be the purpose of just mathematically reproducing the creation of the universe?” Professor Schmitt seemed perplexed.

Ian waited a moment to build suspense and then delivered his punchline. “The beauty of using a computer to model the creation of the universe is not the data that we input, but the discovery of the process by which the universe expanded as represented by the programming code as it is modified to satisfy the requirements of the data! In fact, the existence of the universe should be able to be ultimately represented by one specific Schrodinger wave equation, albeit representing an infinite number of individual wave functions that are in flux.”

“Can you be a little more specific?”

“Well, think of the universe as a giant inflated balloon on the surface which exists the entire matter and energy of the universe. Now think of the air of the balloon being slowly released. As the air in the balloon is released the surface of the balloon would get smaller and smaller until the balloon would become its original size and shape. Similarly, the universe, if it were deflated, would shrink towards its original size and shape, but in this case, would eventually become a singularity because by then all the matter, energy and even the space-time continuum in the universe would have been crushed to a quantum level or singularity. This quantum-level singularity should be able to be represented by a specific wave equation. By examining this wave equation, we might be able to theorize what it represents and hence what caused the origin of the universe.”

“I see,” professor Schmitt mused. “You mean something like ‘reverse-engineering’ a manufactured product, such as an automobile.”

“Exactly! Think of the origin of the universe as a black box from which a product emerges. By the structure and function of a product that emerges from a black box, one should be able to guess how the product was manufactured.”

“Well, we already know a lot about the universe and besides we are already inside the black box.”

“Nooo...,” Ian said slowly. “We are outside the black box. The real black box is whatever it was that caused the ‘big bang’”.

For the first time in a long time, Professor Schmitt’s eyes lit up with excitement. “A fascinating proposal! Go for it, Ian! As your advisor, you certainly have my permission. And you know, I don’t even care if your experiment fails – it’s worth the effort!”

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Six months later, Ian met his advisor for the twentieth time in a series of meetings.

“Well, I think that I’ve entered all the data that I’ve collected from other scientific research on the physics of the universe, and modified my computer program to be congruent with it” he said.

“Did you include Einstein’s ‘Cosmological Constant’?” Professor Schmitt interjected.

“Initially, I didn’t, because I remembered that Einstein arbitrarily added it as a ‘fudge factor’ because he believed at the time that the universe was not expanding. But the data that I collected about the universe, seems to indicate that

at present, not only is the universe expanding, but that the expansion is accelerating so I put it back in because it seemed to satisfy the computer program. Furthermore, from the evidence that we have collected so far, it does appear that all of the material and energy in the universe is expanding, its expansion being one-way only and not cyclical as some scientists hypothesize. Moreover, from our computer calculations, it appears that the universe will continue to expand forever because there seems to be some kind of mysterious energy\* that is accelerating its expansion. In my opinion, Einstein's Cosmological Constant is in some way related to the accelerated expansion of the universe. I guess one could refer metaphorically to this expansion as 'the breath of God'."

[ \*The term 'dark energy' was coined by Michael Turner in 1998.]

Professor Schmitt looked a little perturbed with Ian's reference to the word 'God', but said nothing about it. "Yes," he did say, "in a classical type of explosion, the further the pieces of an explosion are blown away from its center, the more they decelerate and eventually come to a halt and if the expansion universe is accelerating then that must mean that there is some force making it do so. Have you checked your data?"

Ian continued. "Yes, what data we have entered seems to be correct. As well, there have been no 'halting problems' with the program which seems to indicate that my model of the universe is definitely 'algorithmically implementable'."

"What about Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem?"

"Well Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem theoretically really only apply to the field of pure mathematics and not to physics, but we are attempting to describe the physics of the universe in mathematical terms and therefore the final solution to our model may turn out to be 'incomplete', and admittedly, we did have to switch from Newtonian physics to Quantum physics as our model progressed towards singularity conditions. But we won't know whether Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem applies to our mathematical model until it happens and so far, it hasn't happened. And as Albert Einstein said, 'God may be subtle, but he is not malicious!'"

"Humph!" snorted Professor Schmitt, again ignoring Ian's reference to the word 'God'. "That was easy for him to say. What about the Copenhagen Interpretation which states that a quantum particle doesn't exist in one state or another, but in all of its possible states simultaneously until its wave function is caused to collapse?"

Ian chuckled. "Yes, that's quite a conundrum, isn't it? As a matter of fact, if the Universe is a giant wave function, as I suspect, then that implies that all matter in the universe, because it consists ultimately of quantum particles, only exists if there is something there, such as humans, to cause the collapse of an object's wave function by observing it. Moreover, if the universe consists of nothing but quantum energy and if the brain processes all human experiences, awake or asleep, then everything may be 'real', including thought – or nothing may be 'real', including the universe!



Professor Schmitt couldn't contain his exasperation any longer. "Jesus H. Christ, Ian! Don't go metaphysical on me! I know that you studied philosophy and are a Buddhist, but remember we're supposed to be scientists not bloody philosophers!"

Ian laughed sheepishly, "Sorry sir! I'm so excited by what we're doing that I got carried away with the beauty and the potential mathematical simplicity of it all."

Professor Schmitt laughed as well. "It's okay Ian. I'm kind of excited myself, but let's get back to what may have really caused the 'big bang'. What theory does your reverse-engineering of the universe suggest?"

"The good news is that my computer program seems to agree, so far, with the equations that John Wheeler and Bryce Dewitt, are developing manually, as to the viability of a 'big bang' theory."

"And the bad news?"

"The bad news is that the program halts at the instance that the 'big bang' occurred, which makes sense because, as you know, before the 'big bang', space, as we know it did not exist, all the matter in the universe did not exist, time did not exist because our concept of time requires a duration of an event involving at least two objects, and presumably even the laws of physics of our universe did not exist because they depend upon the characteristics and relationship between matter in the universe in which they find themselves and therefore didn't exist before 'the big bang'."

"Can you at least speculate as to what have caused the 'big bang'?"

"Well, one possibility would be that of an exit from a black hole -let's call it a 'white hole'. As you know, astronomers have evidence of the existence of black holes in our universe into which matter is being sucked and presumably, because of gravity, being crushed to a quantum level of pure energy. It's possible that if this quantum energy in the black hole, became powerful enough and was not able to exit back into our universe through a white hole, it could cause a rent in the space-time continuum or fabric of the universe around it and create an exit to a new universe. But so far, we have seen no evidence of white exit holes from black holes in our universe which means that this energy must be going somewhere else, perhaps into another universe."

"Go on," professor Schmitt encouraged.

"Well, a white hole origin of our universe model would satisfy the prevailing 'big bang' model equally well as the current 'quantum fluctuation' theory. And frankly a white hole explanation, makes more logical sense than the current 'ex nihilo'\* explanation of a quantum fluctuation."

[ ex nihilo: literally, 'out of nothing']

"Hmm... Then where would the initial black hole that created the white hole that created our universe come from, Ian?"

"That's the rub! As the ancient Chinese philosopher said when challenged about his belief that the universe was created on the back of a turtle and asked what supported that turtle, 'It's turtles all the way down.' In other words, a white

hole origin of our universe could have been as the result of the exit of energy from the black hole of another universe and so on ad infinitum and in the process also creating many universes or multiverses. But I find this possible explanation aesthetically unscientific. Instead, I believe that any phenomena that we observe, such as black holes, quasars, et cetera, that exist in our universe, although exciting in themselves, are only distractions as to the ultimate cause of the creation of our universe just as would individual battle scenes be in a war movie that we run backwards in time distract from the beginning of the movie. Also, a distinct multiverse theory of the creation of our universe would explain why it appears that our universe was deliberately and uniquely designed for we humans and the existence of multiverses could also be explained by not one, but by an infinite number of quantum fluctuation or singularities happening in what could be referred as 'the quantum ether'."

"The quantum ether? The belief of an 'ether' in our universe through which light rays travel, was discarded as a result of the Michelson-Morley experiment. You should know that."

"Yes sir, I know that, but in the absence of a better word, I'm thinking of resurrecting the word to describe the source of a singularity prior to the creation of our universe and not as part of our universe itself. *I could refer to it as theologian Paul Tillich's 'the ground of being', but I don't think that you would like that term*, Ian laughed to himself. "This 'quantum ether' would by logical necessity exist in another dimension than our own and contain the virtual particles required to create a new universe."

"Go on," encouraged Professor Schmitt.

"Okay. Well, although what really caused the Big Bang to occur may be forever beyond our mental ability to conceptualize, let alone prove scientifically, whatever theory we choose as to what caused it, should at least make logical sense to we humans. So, the following is my hypothesis:

"One -the universe exists. Two -the fact that our universe appears to have been designed specifically to support human life leads me to conclude that either our universe was designed specifically by some kind of super-intelligent being, a 'God', or is just one of billions of universes being created and destroyed all the time. As a scientist, I am compelled to believe that our universe is just one of billions of universes that have been created and that the fact that some humans believe that this universe was created specifically for the human race is because we exist in what appears to be the only universe and therefore believe that it was designed specifically for us by some kind of super-intelligence that we refer to as 'God'.

"Thirdly, the universe appears to have been created by a 'big bang' as the result of a singularity. This implies that our three-dimensional universe, four if you include time, five if you include energy as another dimension, was created by a source conceptually 'outside' of it. This outside source must also possess enough potential energy to create many universes. I say 'potential' energy, because the source itself may not only create space, but also energy and ultimately matter itself as part of the creation of an N-dimensional universe! Moreover, although there may be random quantum fluctuations in my hypothetical external quantum field which would cause singularities and

therefore universes, the total resultant total energy of this external quantum field could still be zero after each fluctuation. I refer to this field as 'the quantum ether' as I have already stated, to distinguish it from any force fields 'inside' of our universe. In order to be able to create more than one universe, this 'quantum ether' would probably require one distinct source of potential energy or 'quantum blip' for each universe that it creates. Think of the quantum ether as a 'container' of a seething 'liquid' from which quanta are continuously being ejected and reabsorbed. The energy of these quanta would be compressed into a one-dimensional frame of reference which when released by a random quantum fluctuation would spew its 'virtual particles' into a new random N-dimensional space-time continuum. These 'virtual particles' would combine and recombine to create real particles and hence matter. Moreover, in my opinion, some of these virtual particles probably fail to combine with other virtual particles and continued to exist in our universe as the virtual particles that they were when part of the quantum ether before the big bang and only are now manifesting themselves through scientific experimentation."

"Hmm, that's an interesting idea, Ian. And your theory is at least more logical than the 'ex nihilo' explanation. But then, where did the 'quantum ether' come from?"

Ian grinned and laughed. "Beats the heck out of me, sir! But then, a similar question could be asked of the 'ex nihilo' or any other theory one suggests. So, I think that I'm going to go with what I refer to in my thesis as the 'Multiverse Quantum Ether Theory'. But where the one-dimensional quantum ether, if it exists, came from, I don't know and I don't think that we will ever know. It may be that we have reached the limits of our understanding of the origin of the creation of everything and that the quantum ether from which everything is ultimately created is the fundamental intrinsic nature of reality. And at the risk of offending you as a scientist, sir, I've come to the personal conclusion that exactly why and how the universe was created is really irrelevant. It's what we know about and do with our universe that is important."

Professor Schmitt smiled indulgently at Ian and gently said, remembering his own exuberance as a Ph.D. candidate. "You have become a little philosophical for a scientist, haven't you?"

"I suppose so, sir, but it makes me so angry when I hear scientists talking about going to other planets and all that crap when we can't even take care of our own!"

"Oh, well," Professor sighed. "I guess that's the thesis for a graduate in Environmental Science. But, at least your computer program did seem to confirm the existing singularity theory and frankly I didn't expect you to be able to pierce the veil of whatever it was that really created our universe, although, your theory does sound interesting. But it really makes you wonder, why and not how, the universe was created in the first place, doesn't it?" he admitted.

"Yes," Ian agreed, but took some comfort in knowing that Professor Schmitt's secretary, Maria, would be there to console himself that evening.

Ian had completed his Ph.D. in Quantum Physics, refused an offer to work for the U.S. Department of Defense when they asked him, applied to and was accepted to teach at one of the smaller universities in the state. It was while he was teaching there that he met and married Candy. Her name alone should have alerted him to the disaster to come.

Candy had flounced unannounced one day into her father's office in the middle of one of the advisory meetings that he was having with Ian. Ian had stood up. "I'm sorry daddy," she had apologized without sincerity. "I didn't know that you were in a meeting."

"That's quite alright my dear," her father had replied. "What is it that you want?"

"Well mommy and I would like to go shopping this afternoon and I'm a little short of cash this month. Could you loan me a hundred until I get my next allowance?"

Her father would have liked to have said "I just gave you a hundred dollars two days ago, you selfish bitch," but instead smiled sweetly in front of Ian and said. "Of course, dear," took out his wallet and extracted a hundred dollars, which left it almost empty.

"Oh, by the way, Candy," he added, remembering his manners, "I would like you to meet one of the rising stars on our faculty -Ian Campbell. Ian has come to us from Berkeley and is going to teach Particle Physics at our university. We have great hopes for him here. Someday he may even have my job," he added, winking at him.

"Hi Candy," Ian said, holding out his hand.

"Hi Ian," said Candy taking his hand but unobtrusively stroking the palm of it with her right index finger as she did so, and holding onto it for a second longer than necessary.

*Either she's a Mason\* or she's hitting on me*, Ian thought. He looked into Candy's eyes. Candy's eyes shone back with lust. *She's no goddamned Mason*, he concluded and made a mental note to 'bump' into her again. He did so, began dating her and having sex with her on a regular basis.

[ \*'Freemasonry' is a fraternal organization in which members greet other members by means of a secret handshake.]

Candy's father encouraged Ian to court Candy, and once even went as far to say to him. "With your brains and Candy's looks, Ian, your children would be beautiful geniuses." To which Ian had felt like replying, *Yes, but suppose our children had my looks and her brains!*

It seemed like a good idea at the time to marry Candy. After all, she was attractive. She had been born a very beautiful baby and had grown up to be a very tall, blond, blue-eyed gifted athlete. She had been a member of her high-school's cheerleading team and 'a member of more school teams than you could shake a stick at' as her father used to brag to Ian. But what her father had not

known but would not have told Ian even if he had known, was that Candy was also a slut and the only girl in the history of her high-school to have literally 'made the football team'! After graduating from high-school, she had gone on to a local college and was majoring in 'Recreational Activities' when her father who happened to be the Head of Ian's Physics department, had introduced her to him.

Although Candy was no rocket scientist, their sex was good and plentiful, and she was very beautiful. Their children would undoubtedly grow up to be 'healthy, wealthy and wise'. Moreover, Ian now had a well-paying job and his own research lab at the university. *What else could one want in life?*

However, the possibility of having children with Candy's brains didn't arise after all, because within six months after Ian married her, she confessed to him one night when he talked of having children that she could not have children as a result of a botched abortion\* that she had while in high-school and which her parents knew nothing about.

[ \* Apparently, she had become impregnated by the captain of the high school football team, had been too afraid to tell her parents and had gone to a backstreet abortionist who had butchered her reproductive organs.]

But even before this revelation, Ian's ardor towards Candy had already begun to cool. True, before they were married it had seemed exciting to have sex in as many different places and in as many different ways as Candy had insisted upon. Sure, she was still sexually demanding. But soon after their marriage there seemed to be something missing in their relationship. True affection, if it had ever existed in the beginning, seemed to have gone out of their marriage. Sex was becoming part of a meaningless ritual for Ian.

As part of that ritual, Ian would get up each morning, usually after a night of exhausting sex, make his own breakfast and sandwiches for lunch and go off to his research lab and lectures. He would spend the day at the university and remain there in the lab into the late evening. When he returned home, the ritual would begin again. To avoid making his breakfast and lunch, Candy would get out of bed only after he had left for work. She had also dropped out of college and usually spent her day, shopping, playing bridge, and golf or tennis. At least that's what she told Ian whenever he asked her what she had done that day.

As for any meaningful conversations between Ian and Candy, there were none. Whenever he tried to explain to Candy what it was that he did, or even discuss anything other than the weather or sports, Candy's only reaction was to say "That's of no interest to me," and go back to watching television or reading her romance novels.

But the event that really destroyed Ian's marriage was the day that he came home and found some guy having sex with Candy! Ian had just completed the most important experiment in his life, in which he had artificially re-created matter in the laboratory and had come home early to share the exciting news with Candy -not that she would have understood what he would have tried to explain to her.

He had rushed into the house and when he did not see Candy anywhere on the ground floor, had bounded up the stairs and toward their bedroom where she

spent most of her time when at home, lying in bed, reading and eating candy. Bursting into the bedroom with a big grin on his face, he had skidded to an abrupt halt. There, nude and spread-eagled, on the bed, on her back with her legs in the air was Candy. Between her legs and hunched over her, grunting and thrusting was one of her tennis partners, his tennis racket and white tennis shorts at his feet.

Candy's back was arched, her eyes rolled back in her head. Her mouth was open and she was moaning with pleasure. Hearing a noise in the doorway she had opened her eyes, looked over her lover's shoulder, and saw Ian. She had tensed momentarily, waiting for him to say something. Her reaction had been sensed by her lover. Glancing up at her, he had seen her staring at something behind him but by the time he had turned to look over his shoulder, Ian had wheeled and left the room.

"What was that?" her lover had whispered.

"Nothing. Nothing at all," Candy had moaned and pulled him back down on top of her.

Ian had left the house immediately, gone to the nearest phone booth, found the first lawyer he could in the Yellow Pages, made an appointment to see him the next day, spent the night in a hotel room and the next day filed for divorce. He never spoke to Candy again. But his lawyer did. When he found out what had happened, Candy's father repeatedly begged Ian to take her back and when that failed, tried to bribe him to do so by offering to recommend him for his own position as Head of Department when he retired the following year. Ian refused of course, and immediately began sending copies of his *curriculum vitae* to as many other universities as possible. In the meantime, he continued to do what he had always done well -work on his research and teach. Unbeknown to him it was Rachel Danan's university that was the first to offer him a job and it was for that reason alone that he had unwittingly accepted the position, not knowing that she was already a professor there.

June 4, 1971

"Ian! Ian Campbell!" someone shouted. It was a woman's voice. At first, Ian thought that it was Carole, one of his 'old flames'. But no, it couldn't be Carole because she had married a doctor and moved to Texas quite a few years ago. Looking for the source of the voice, he saw someone waving wildly from across the crowded airport terminal and moving quickly toward him. At first, he didn't recognize her because she now wore horn-rimmed glasses.

"It's me," the stranger said, as she approached him.

"Rachel! What are you doing here?" Ian asked, recognizing her throaty voice but not fully her features. Rachel Danan was the last person he expected to run into at the airport. It had been years since he had last seen her!

"Oh, waiting for a very important person to arrive," she whispered conspiratorially.

"Who?" Ian asked, looking around innocently.

"You, silly," she grinned, as she hugged him. "I heard that you were coming in on the ten o'clock flight, had nothing to do, so thought that I'd drop by the airport and pick you up."

"Thanks, Rachel. This is a pleasant surprise," Ian said, emphasizing the word 'is'. "How the hell have you been anyway? I haven't seen you since Christ was a cowboy. How did you know that I was coming?"

"Didn't you know that I'm psychic?" she joked. "And besides, I was a member of the selection committee that hired you," she explained.

"What!"

"Yes. I guess you didn't know that I'm now a professor at the university. Affirmative action and all that jazz, you know."

"No, I didn't know. It's been a long time since I last saw you," Ian said, thinking of the years that he had wasted before getting his own Ph.D.

"Yes. Time flies!"

"Like an arrow," Ian added, finishing the simile.

"And fruit flies like a banana," Rachel quipped, wryly. Ian thought he sensed a little sadness in her voice.

"By the way, I'm sorry that I didn't recognize you at first. You've become really ...." Ian said, stumbling for words.

"Thinner?" Rachel volunteered with a mischievous grin.

"No," Ian said, reddening slightly, "I was going to say, 'attractive'."

Rachel beamed! "Well it has been six years since we last saw each other," she said, letting him off the hook gracefully. "Where's your luggage?"

"This is it," Ian said, pointing to his overnight bag. "I sent the rest of my belongings, including my books, ahead of me by overland express. They should get to the university from California in a few days."

"Well, let's get the show on the road. Grab your bag. My car's not too far away." Picking up his overnight bag, Ian followed her outside.

Striding across the cross-walk in front of the airport, Rachel bounded up the stairs to the first level of the elevated parking garage, her light print cotton dress swirling around her beautifully tanned legs. From his vantage point below, Ian caught a glimpse of her white panties. He stopped to admire her. *God, she's*

*beautiful!* he thought.

Reaching the top of the stairs, Rachel turned around and stood with arms akimbo. The light from the parking garage behind shone through the thin cotton dress that she wore, outlining her now perfectly proportioned figure and showing the broad gap at the bottom of her pudendum. Ian gulped.

"Well, what are you waiting for slowpoke?" she laughed, wheeled around and was gone. By the time Ian got to the top of the stairs, Rachel had reached a red Jaguar convertible sports car not too far away and was sitting in it.

"Wow, nice car!" Ian said as he approached it.

"Yep! My landlord paid for it."

Ian arched his eyebrows. *That must be an interesting relationship*, he thought.

"Put your bag behind your seat and get in."

He did so and eased his six-foot, two-hundred-pound frame into the front seat beside her. He was hardly in the car, before Rachel roared off, screeching her tires as she maneuvered out of the parking lot. He had not even time to fasten his seat-belt!

"For Christ's sake, slow down!" Ian begged. "You're going to get me killed before I even begin my teaching career."

"Sorry!" Rachel said, and slowed down to a normal speed as Ian finished fastening his seat-belt. Breathing a sigh of relief, he sat back in his seat and began to relax for the hour ride into the city.

Glancing sideways, Ian was now able to observe Rachel at his leisure. She looked strikingly like the singer Nana Mouskouri. The horn-rimmed glasses that she now wore helped create that image. She still had the same long beautiful jet-black hair that she had six years ago, but instead of being frowsy as it used to be, it was pulled back in a ponytail, accenting her flawless olive complexion and high cheekbones. Her face had never been what one would call beautiful, but it always had a certain 'je ne sais quoi' about it but it was somehow much more attractive than he had remembered it. It was thinner now -no doubt as a result of the weight she had lost since he last saw her and her nose seemed somehow straighter.

*I know*, Ian thought, *a nose-job! Yes, definitely a nose-job!* Whereas the 'old' Rachel's nose had been slightly hooked and fleshy, the 'new' Rachel's nose was straight and smaller, matching her face perfectly. *Well, what the hell*, he mused, *if having her nose fixed makes her feel better about herself than she used to, then why not? She had a hard-enough time attracting the right guys when she was in university and if losing weight and having a nicer looking nose makes her feel better about herself now, then who am I criticize her? It's not her fault that men judge women by their beauty and not their personalities. As a matter of fact, it's that flaw in men that got me into the jackpot with my bimbo wife, Candy, in the first place!* he added ruefully.

Rachel's breasts were as beautiful as they had always been -not that he'd ever had an opportunity to touch them. Unless it was that time, years ago when she'd accidentally brushed against him in the lab one day during his undergraduate years. Still erect and proud, her nipples showed through the thin cotton summer dress, outlined by the dark aureoles surrounding them. Words



from the 'Songs of Solomon' which he used to read to Martha flitted through Ian's head:

*'Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.'* Man, Ian thought, *I sure would love to feed among those lilies.*

Rachel's lips looked fuller and more relaxed now that she wore lipstick. *I wonder what it would be like to make love to her now? So much for that idea!* Ian sighed to himself regretfully. *She never allowed me to even kiss her in the past and I don't see it happening now that she's so beautiful. Besides, knowing her, she probably already has a string of boyfriends. She might even be married by now.*

*No. She's not even engaged,* he observed. She didn't have a ring on the third finger of the left hand that nestled in the crotch of her dress. The fingers on her right hand, with which she was driving, had no rings on them as well -only the scar where the extra vestigial thumb that she'd had borne with embarrassment at university had been removed. Her right wrist showed a thin line, undoubtedly, from one of her suicide attempts as an undergraduate.

Rachel's dress hiked up, presumably to allow her to drive more comfortably, confirmed that she still had the best legs that he'd ever seen on a woman, with the exception of Nona. *But she must at least have a steady boyfriend by now,* he thought, regretting the night so many years ago that she had offered herself to him in a drunken stupor and he had refused out of respect for her condition. He began to feel himself become sexually aroused and shifted uncomfortably.

"What?" Rachel asked suddenly, staring at him with her large beautiful brown eyes and startling him out of his sexual fantasy.

"Oh nothing. Just thinking about the good old days." Ian thought he saw Rachel wince slightly and remembered that the 'good old days' had not been 'the good old days' for her, nor for him for that matter.

Changing the subject quickly, he said brightly, "As the fellow said when he walked into the antique shop, 'What's new?'"

"Not too much. As I told you earlier, I'm a professor at Lakefield University now. I stayed on at the university after you left and got my Ph.D. in Biology. I lecture there and am involved in genetic research. I have my own research lab and do a bit of lecturing on the side. Nothing exciting."

"That's great! You've done alright for yourself."

"Yes, I guess."

"Married?"

"Nope!" Rachel replied, waving her left hand. "Never had time. What about you? Are you married?"

"Tried it once. Didn't like it," Ian grimaced. Rachel didn't pursue the subject.

They drove on for a few more moments, before Rachel said. "Well, you know what I've been doing for the last six years. What about you?"

"Oh, nothing much. As you probably guessed, when Professor Kahn died, I took it pretty hard. I decided to take Tim Leary's advice. I dropped out of university, turned on to marijuana and bummed around Detroit for a while. I spent a bit of time in New Mexico with the Zuni Indians, and joined a Buddhist

ashram in San Francisco for a while trying to find some kind of meaning to life before returning to university to finish my Ph.D. And, oh yeah, as I said before, I got married."

"And did you find what you were looking for?"

"Nope, I'm still looking."

"Sounds as if you've had an interesting life so far."

"Yes, I have. I'll tell you about it sometime."

"I'd like that."

Changing the subject, Rachel said. "Let me see, your Ph.D. was in 'Quantum Physics' from Berkeley wasn't it?"

"Yes, but how would you know...?" Ian began, but then caught himself.

"That's right. I forgot. You were on the selection committee."

Again, they drove along in silence for a while, each trying to think of something to say to the other.

Reinitiating the conversation, Rachel said a bit reproachfully "I wish that you had said goodbye to me when you left, Ian. I thought that we were good friends at university."

"We were, Rachel and still are, I hope. I'm sorry for not contacting you before I left, but as I said, I just couldn't handle it when Marina died. I guess I didn't realize how much she meant to me and I just went all to hell when she died the way she did!"

"You must have loved her very much," Rachel said gently.

"Yes, I did, but not in the way that you think. Marina was not only a good friend and my mentor, but was also probably a substitute for the mother that I never had."

"What do you mean 'by the mother that you never had'?"

"My mother died giving me birth."

Thinking of her own mother's death, Rachel's lips tightened perceptively. "I didn't know. I thought that professor Kahn was your lover. We all did."

"No, I never did have sex with her. I know it sounds corny but I loved her with a pure heart. I guess she was the only woman, I have ever loved that way."

"I think I know what you mean," Rachel said quietly and they both fell silent again, each with their own thoughts.

By now, they were approaching the city but still some distance away. From their elevation they could see the city sprawled out below them like a giant leviathan, its millions of eyes of light staring at them malevolently, as if getting ready to devour them.

"Look at all those lights," Ian said. "It makes you wonder what the hell life is all about, doesn't it?"

"Mm..." Rachel agreed and paused for a moment. "What do you think life is all about, Ian?" she asked, emphasizing the word 'you'.

"I don't know. What I've experienced so far in my life, leads me to believe that it's a strange, strange world in which we live. If I were an alien from another planet visiting Earth I would probably think that I was visiting an intergalactic insane asylum."

"Do you think that there is other life in the Universe?"

"Probably. When you consider the fact that the Universe is at least thirty-

five billion light years in diameter, with trillions of suns similar to our own, the probability that there is life somewhere on at least one planet similar to our own reaches certainty. Have you ever heard of the 'Drake Equation'?"

"No, I don't think that I have. My specialty is genetics, remember." Rachel said, a little defensively.

"Sorry! I didn't mean to appear to sound condescending. Well the Drake Equation," Ian explained, "was developed by the astronomer Frank Drake about 1960. Using an equation that he developed, he attempted to determine how many intelligent civilizations capable of communicating with each other there might be in just our Milky Way galaxy of one hundred billion stars. The equation asks for input for only seven variables and when all of these variables are multiplied together one comes up with the hypothetical number of civilizations in our galaxy that should be able to communicate with each other. Drake himself admits that there is a tremendous amount of guesswork involved in determining what value to give each variable. I can't remember all of the variables right now, but when I plugged my own data into the Drake Equation a few years ago, do you know how many potential civilizations in the Milky Way capable of communication with us that I came up with? Just one! Just one - Earth! Granted, in my case, I used the worst-case scenario," he continued, "but even the best-case scenario spits out only one thousand potential sentient\* civilizations in our galaxy."

[ \* Possessing consciousness similar to ours ]

"Now, nine hundred and ninety-nine other potential civilizations with which to communicate sounds like a lot, but remember I said that just our galaxy alone contains over one hundred billion stars. This means that if the one thousand sentient civilizations to which I am referring were spread evenly throughout our galaxy, only one star in one hundred million would support life as we know it. Our first problem would be to find which star in one hundred million would support life similar to ours. And our second problem, even if we were able to find and communicate with one of these proverbial needles in a haystack would be that we would never be able to visit them. Because you see, the real problem with ever meeting other intelligent life forms in the universe is distance," he concluded and waited for Rachel to grasp the significance of what he had just said. "Pull over for a moment, will you?" he added suddenly.

Rachel pulled the car over to the side of the road and for a moment thought that Ian might be getting out of the car for a *pishin*, (Ladino: piss) which was the crude expression that her stepfather used, instead of the polite form *mashtin zayn*, (Ladino: make water) when he would stagger drunkenly to the back door to urinate outside instead of going to the bathroom upstairs. As a child, the woodshed of her house had reeked of her stepfather's urine and once he had almost urinated on her in the dark when she had come home late from a babysitting job, one night.

But Ian stayed in the car. "See that star over there?" he asked, pointing to Sirius. The sky was filled with stars, in spite of the yellow glow of the city in the

distance.

"No," Rachel said, and moved over to his side of the car in order to see better.

"That one - the brightest star in the sky."

"I think I see it," Rachel said, moving a little closer such that her body was almost in contact with Ian's. The musky scent of her perfume wafted to his nostrils.

He took a furtive breath of her body before continuing. "Okay then, just to confirm that you've located it. Do you see three stars in a diagonal row with a red star in the middle?" drawing his finger down on an angle from right to left.

"Yes."

"That's Orion's Belt in the constellation Orion. Now continue to draw an imaginary line down through the three stars in Orion's belt and you will run into the star Sirius. Do you see it?"

"Yes."

"That star is the tenth closest star in the universe to earth of all the trillions of stars up there that you see. I can't point out to you any of the nine closer stars because they are either in the southern hemisphere or are not bright enough to be seen with the naked eye. Well, using conventional space technology, it would take a spaceship travelling at ten miles per second, or thirty-six thousand miles an hour about 160,000 years to reach that star which is one of the closest to us! At the same speed, it would take about 80,000 years to reach Proxima which is the star nearest us, although you can't see it at this latitude.

[ Our sun is, of course, the earth's nearest star but is usually not thought of as a 'star' ]

"At some time in the far distant future, scientists might be able to build giant self-contained spaceships equipped with 'photon engines' that will travel throughout the universe looking for sentient life as well as new planets to populate. But it would take a hell of a long time! And, anyway, I think that the human race will have destroyed itself long before we are able to do that. As far as I'm concerned, the human race is just whistling past the graveyard," he concluded bitterly.

Rachel shivered and huddled closer to Ian, her body touching his. He felt a tingle of electricity course through his body, jolting him back to an awareness of where they were.

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "Here I am giving you an astronomy lesson while you're getting cold and tired after a long day. We'd better get going."

"I guess so," Rachel said, hesitated for a moment as if she were going to say something, but then slid over behind the steering-wheel, started the car and pulled again out onto the highway. Ian reached down and turned the heater on in order warm her. A few minutes later, she reached down and shut the heater off. For it wasn't the cool night air that had made Rachel shiver. It was the finality of what Ian had said earlier.

They had not travelled too much further before Rachel spoke again, "If, as you say, the universe is almost devoid of life, let alone sentient life, and if it is

very unlikely that we will ever encounter life forms as we know them to be, it makes one kind of wonders how and why the Universe was created in the first place doesn't it?"

"Not really." Ian replied smugly. "The Universe was created by a random quantum fluctuation".

"A what?"

"A quantum fluctuation."

"What the heck's a quantum fluctuation? Remember, I'm only a geneticist," she teased.

"Well," Ian said, warming to his subject, "a quantum fluctuation occurs when virtual particles become real."

"Okay, I'll bite," Rachel said, encouraging him to continue. "What's a virtual particle?"

"I won't go into detail, but a virtual particle is a potential elementary building block of our universe that exists outside our three-dimensional universe of time and space and only becomes part of a real three-dimensional particle when it interacts in certain ways with other virtual particles," Ian said, quoting verbatim from his thesis.

"Hmm, so then where did the virtual particles that existed outside our three-dimensional universe of time and space before they became real particles come from?" asked Rachel, a little puzzled.

Ian grinned. "Damned if I know. All we know is that at one moment there was nothing - no time, no space, no matter, and then, 'presto-chango'\* there was something.

[\* An expression originally used by magicians to express mysterious change.]

"The official scientific position is that before the so-called 'big bang', time did not exist; our universe did not exist; even our present laws of physics did not exist and therefore cannot be used to describe what may have existed before the 'big bang'. Ergo, there is no scientific explanation!"

Rachel challenged his explanation. "Have you ever considered the possibility that something other than your hypothetical random quantum fluctuation may have created the Universe?"

"You mean a God?"

"Not exactly, but some kind of super-intelligence."

"Well, yes," Ian said, this time with a trace of condescension in his voice. "But that question is pretty metaphysical\*.

[\* A reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses.]

"I went through the intellectual exercise in one of my philosophy courses of attempting to prove the existence of some kind of super-intelligence, or God, by reason alone, but came to the conclusion that if a God or 'super-intelligence' exists, there is no way that we can prove it unless scientifically. And even if there was a super-intelligence that created the universe," he went on, "it could

not possibly be the kind of anthropomorphic\* super-intelligence that most religions believe in.

[ \*Having human qualities such as hate, love, etc.]

"Because if there is such a super-intelligence then its' gotta be a pretty sick puppy to allow all the shit to happen to people that does," he said bitterly, thinking of everything that he had seen and experienced so far in his own life. "Excuse me for swearing, Rachel, but I get so damned mad. The whole god-damned world is sleep-walking toward oblivion. As far as I'm concerned, we humans are pretty much on our own as a species. No divine intervention, no predestination -just the 'flying freaking fickle finger of fate'!" and held up his right middle finger. "Sorry again," he continued, apologizing once more. "But the alliteration was just too good to ignore," he added with a grin.

"Hey, it's okay Ian. I've been there, done that, remember? But have you considered the possibility that although the thing that created the universe may not be anthropomorphic, 'It' may still exist, but is beyond our understanding," Rachel responded, emphasizing the word 'It'.

"No!" Ian said emphatically. "I told you that there is no scientific proof for the existence of a creator of the universe and that the universe was created by a random fluctuation."

"Hmm...", Rachel said, appearing to think. "Well, can you prove scientifically that it was virtual particles that existed outside of time and space that created the universe?"

"No, of course not. I just told you that we couldn't because our laws of physics only came into existence after the 'big bang'," retorted Ian, a little exasperated.

"Well then, your theory sounds pretty metaphysical to me too," Rachel said looking at him with innocent big brown eyes.

Ian frowned, scratching his chin as he did whenever he was trying to get his mind around a conundrum. "Touche," he grinned and looked at her with a new-found respect.

"You know Ian, I'm not just another pretty face," Rachel said jokingly, "I've got a good mind as well as a good set of tits."

"You sure have," Ian said, but blushed realizing the double entendre of what he had just said. "I mean about your mind," he blurted. "And a good sense of humor too," he added. "Perhaps we could talk about things like this some more, sometime," he said, thinking of her breasts.

"I'd like that," she said innocently.

By now, they were approaching the suburbs of the city. Changing the subject, Ian said. "I wasn't sure how I was going to get into the city. Thanks for picking me up."

"I'll drop you off. Where are you staying?"

"To tell you the truth, I'm not sure. I don't take up residence on the campus until tomorrow afternoon and I had planned to spend the night at a hotel."

"No way Jose! Not at the prices they charge in this city! You're staying at my place tonight."

"But..." Ian protested.

"Ian, don't be such a prude! We're friends, aren't we? And we are big boys and girls, aren't we? Are you afraid that I might try to seduce you?" Rachel teased.

Ian reddened for the fourth time that night. "No, I don't think that at all!". But to avoid further embarrassment, he conceded "Well, I'll stay overnight then, if you don't mind," yawned, slouched down in his seat and pretended to nap.

They drove along for a while longer, again each with their own thoughts. After about what Ian guessed to be about ten minutes, Rachel announced. "We're here."

Pretending to wake up, Ian yawned, stretched and looked around and saw himself surrounded by the partly familiar campus of six years ago. There appeared to have been a lot of changes since then, but it was really too dark to tell. He decided that the next day he would investigate the campus and his old stomping grounds more fully.

Rachel parked her car in front of one of the older homes still on campus. "This is where I live." It was the same house in which she had lived six years before.

"Hey, this is the same house that you lived in six years ago."

"Yes, *De mas cosa de mas si keda mesmo*\*."

[ \*Ladino: "The more things change, the more they stay the same"]

"What?" Ian grunted getting his overnight bag from behind his seat.

"Nothing," Rachel remarked, and walked up the sidewalk to the house. Unlocking the front door, she left it open behind her for Ian to follow, went over to the first door on the right on the main floor, unlocked it and went inside, turning on the lights as she did so. Ian closed the front door of the house behind him and followed her into her apartment closing that door behind him as well.

"Well, dis is de place," Rachel said throwing out her arms. Ian looked around. The general layout of the apartment was as he remembered it; same kitchen area; same dining area; same bathroom, and presumably the same bedroom that he had been in only once before.

But this time there was something dramatically different about Rachel's apartment. -it was spotless! Where there had been chaos before, now there was order. Ian remembered that six years ago, when he had helped a drunken Rachel home, the place had been a dump, with dirty dishes in the sink and on a wobbly filthy table in the center of the room. There had been a dirty white stove that looked as if its top had not been cleaned since the day that the landlord had installed it. The refrigerator had been a sickly looking avocado green color and Ian had smelled rotting food emanating from it when he had brought her home that night. Her battered couch that had rested against the far wall at the time, with its horsehair padding sticking out under a dirty grey blanket and had obviously been picked up at a second-hand store was gone. Its' two 'end-tables' had been wooden orange crates begged from a local supermarket. There had been no television. The bedroom had been no better-looking. Her clothes had been strewn all over the place -on the unmade bed, on the floor, on the furniture

and sticking out of her second-hand dresser drawers which had been left open at random. Her stained panties had been piled in a heap in one corner with her dirty brassieres.

But now the kitchen was spotless. The stainless-steel sink was empty. All dishes had been put away in new oaken cupboards. The white marble countertop was bare, with the exception of a toaster and coffee-maker. The matching stove and refrigerator gleamed white. Through the open bathroom door, Ian could see what appeared to be all white new bathroom fixtures, instead of the dirty brown colors that he glimpsed the last time that he had there. The dining area also consisted of new furniture. The table and matching four chairs were of simple plain oak. The chairs were upholstered in beautiful brown and gold brocade. A tiffany lamp hung over the table. The living room, if you could call it a living room, because it was so small, was an extension of the kitchen and dining area and consisted of a couch against the far wall and a matching cloth-covered recliner off to one side with a floor lamp behind it. A small color television sat on a low oak table against the bedroom wall on the right in such a way as to be able to be seen from the couch, the recliner, and the kitchen table. In addition to appearing a lot cleaner than it had been, the apartment appeared brighter. And it was. Every wall in the apartment had been painted white.

*Simple, but elegant. Ockham\* would have been proud of her,* Ian thought.

[ \*William of Ockham was a fourteenth century philosopher who believed that the explanation of things should be kept as simple as possible. Later, twentieth century scientists would attempt to apply this philosophy to science]

The only things out of place in the whole apartment were a few books that lay open on the oak coffee table in front of the couch. Strangely enough, the apartment was still devoid of any photographs, as it had been the last time that he had been there. *I wonder what her bedroom looks like now?* Ian asked himself. Inside his head a voice that sounded a lot like Rachel's answered. *'You'll never know buddy-boy!'*

"Your apartment is beautiful, but kind of small isn't it?" Ian ventured.

"Yes," beamed Rachel. "But I prefer it that way. I live alone. My needs are simple and I do all of my work at the lab. Besides," she laughed, "it's still under the same rent control that it was nine years ago when I first moved into it."

*Christ! No wonder you can afford a spiffy red Jaguar!* Ian thought.

"Well, *mi amigo*," Rachel said. "I guess we'd both better get some sleep. I have a big day tomorrow and I'm sure that you have as well. You can sleep on the pull-out," she said, pointing to the couch. Going into her bedroom, she came out with a couple of sheets and a pillow, gave them to Ian and went back into her bedroom.

"Goodnight, Ian," she called from behind her closed door.

"Goodnight Rachel. And thanks for letting me stay at your place tonight."

"What are friends for?" he heard her reply, followed by music playing faintly from the other side of the door.

Ian took his overnight bag to the chair near the couch, moved the coffee



table with the books on it to one side, opened the pull-out couch, put the sheets on it, undressed to his shorts after making sure that Rachel's door was still closed and quickly went into the bathroom with his toothbrush. He washed his face and hands, brushed his teeth, peeked out of the bathroom door to see if Rachel was in the living-room and when he discovered that she was not, tiptoed quietly across the room and got quickly under the single cotton sheet. Exhausted from the long trip from California and from jet-lag, Ian was asleep in less than a minute.

Once, during the night, Ian awoke and thought that he heard Rachel going through the living-room and into the bathroom. Still tired, he began to drift off to sleep again. And then, still half-asleep, he felt someone slip into bed beside him and put their arms around him. It was Rachel.

Kissing him on the back of his bare neck and shoulders, she drew back the covers and began fondling him in the dark. Her warm, smooth nude body pressed against his back. He began to get aroused. It had been a long time since he had had sex with a woman.

"I thought that you said you wouldn't seduce me," Ian mumbled still half-asleep.

"*Te menta*," [Ladino: I lied] Rachel whispered and rolled him over onto his back.

"What?"

"Shhh..."

"But I haven't showered," Ian protested feebly, not having anticipated her advances.

"*No ma importa un blede*," [Ladino: "It doesn't matter"] Rachel said softly in the dark and mounted him.

Slowly, and in full control, Rachel rode Ian as her Andalusian ancestors had ridden their stallions centuries ago, hunched low over him, her bare thighs gripping his flanks. Nestling her face next to his neck, she breathed in the masculine odor of his unwashed body and whispered over and over again "*Te kero, te kero, te kero!*" as if urging him to go faster.

Ian, groaned with pleasure, began to climax and tried to withdraw, but could not. The sensation was too exquisite and Rachel's thighs held him fast. Paroxysms of pleasure surged through his body as he exploded inside of her. His body collapsed, spent.

Sensing that he was finished, Rachel kissed him passionately on the mouth grabbing his hair with both hands as she did so. Dismounting, she got up and walked silently, nude, to her bedroom without a backward glance. For the rest of the night Ian had the best sleep that he had in months. And for the first time since Marina's death he did not have the recurring dream in which he was drowning.

It was almost ten o'clock the next morning when Ian awoke refreshed. Remembering the previous night with Rachel, he began to become sexually aroused again. But there was no sign of her. *Was it a dream?* he wondered. *It couldn't have been*, he reasoned. *It was too real!* The stained sheets testified to that. Well, there was only one way to find out.

"Rachel," Ian whispered quietly. No answer! "Rachel," he whispered a little louder. Still no answer. Getting out of bed, Ian, put on his jeans, just in case the dream had not been real, tiptoed across the room and rapped on her bedroom door. Still no answer. Cautiously, he opened the bedroom door, but still no Rachel. He glanced around the rest of the apartment. The bathroom door was open and the kitchen was empty. She was gone.

Going back into the living room, Ian sat down on the edge of the pull-out in order to think. *I don't get it*, he thought, scratching his chin. *I spent almost my entire undergraduate years trying to seduce Rachel when she wasn't that attractive and overweight and when you would think that she would have appreciated a little attention. Now that she is a beautiful, vibrant woman she lets me have sex with her. I don't get it.*

He shrugged. *Oh, well, sex is sex, and sex like that doesn't come along very often.* Come to think of it, he had not had sex now for a long time nor had he seemed to want to. After Candy, it had no longer seemed important to him. That is, until he met Rachel again.

Bringing himself back to the present, Ian spoke to himself. *Well, time to go.* Getting up from the edge of the pull-out, he folded the stained sheets, placed them neatly on the coffee table with the pillow on top of them, closed the pull-out and placed the coffee table back where he had found it the night before.

Yawning, he scratched his now stubbled chin and decided to shave, hoping that Rachel might come back for a repeat performance while he was still there. Getting his shaving kit out of his overnight bag, he padded into the bathroom in his bare feet. He stood in front of the cabinet mirror in front of him, examining his features. *Not bad for a guy almost thirty years old*, he bragged to himself as he went through the mental checklist as he did each morning; hair -not as blond as it used to be. A bit of Grecian Formula would fix that up as he got older; eyes -a little puffy after his long trip, but they were still a bright deep penetrating blue and he did not have to wear glasses yet. He grimaced, showing his teeth. His teeth were white, even, and no signs of cavities. His oral surgeon, who he used to visit every three months before he met Candy had seen to that -at least until her boyfriend caught them. He stepped back from the mirror, sucked in his stomach, grasped one hand and clenched his fists as if in a body-builder's 'pose-down'.

*Not bad, not bad at all!* he thought. He could see why Rachel would have wanted his body last night. He couldn't remember any women ever having said 'No' to him -except Rachel. Until now!

By the time, Ian had shaved, brushed his teeth and showered, Rachel had still not returned. Returning to the living room, he slowly began to finish getting dressed still hoping that she would return, and as he did so, walked inquisitively around the apartment. It was then that he saw for the first time, the piece of paper propped against the sugar bowl on the kitchen table. It read:

*'Hi Ian:*

*Sorry that I had to run.*

*Have a meeting first thing this morning.*

*Won't be home all day.*

*See you sometime.*

*Good luck with your new job.*

*Rachel'*

*'See you sometime.'* *What kind of brush-off is that?* Ian asked himself. *What does she do? Have sex with every new male faculty member to welcome them to the university?* Good old Rachel, Ian sighed. *Hasn't changed a bit from what I can see. Well, I can't complain* he again philosophized and continued to glance around her apartment.

There certainly was a place for everything and everything was in its' place. Rachel sure was a lot neater now! Almost too neat. His curiosity got the better of him. Her note said that she would not be home all day. *What harm can it do if I were to check out her bedroom?*

Walking cautiously over to Rachel's bedroom door, Ian opened it and peeked inside, half expecting her to jump out at him and say 'Gotcha'. She'd always been unpredictable. But she wasn't behind the door. He stepped inside and looked around. All the furniture in the bedroom was white, but otherwise nondescript. The bed had been carefully made, and was covered with a white flower-patterned bedspread. The flowers in the pattern looked like blue 'forget-me-nots'. Beside her bed was a white night-table together with the customary gold colored lamp to go with it. Beside the lamp lay an open book, face down.

*What scientific tome is she reading now?* Walking over to the table, Ian picked the book up, making sure not to lose Rachel's place in it and looked at its title. The yellow tattered book-jacket read 'Never Kiss a Frog'\*

[ \*Anderson, Marilyn. Never Kiss a Frog: A Girl's Guide to Creatures from the Dating Swamp. New York: Red Rock Press.]

Below the title was the author's name and the author's picture. Ian turned the book over to see what Rachel had been reading. His eyes fell upon a sentence\* that she had hand-written in the margin. *Interesting!* he thought, and replaced the book exactly as he had found it.

[ \*The sentence read: 'Never, ever kiss a frog. Once a frog, always a frog!']

On the other side of the bed was another night-table identical to the first and on that night-table was a lamp identical to the other lamp. The only difference was that this night table held a tape recorder with a tape in it. Pushing the 'play' button, Ian heard the same music coming from it that he had heard the night before. The tune sounded familiar but was being sung in a foreign language that sounded like Spanish. *Maybe she's studying Spanish.* Rewinding the tape recorder to about where it had been before, he shut it off. Opening the drawer for this night-table, he discovered it full of neatly filed cassettes with their spine labels facing up. Most of the tapes had Spanish-looking titles. A few were in English. One cassette, still opened and empty, read 'Avi Malka Sings Roy Orbison in Ladino\*'.

[ \*The Roy Orbison song that Ian heard being sung in Ladino the previous night was 'En shuenyos'. ('In Dreams')]

Ian carefully closed the drawer. *Ladino? What the hell's Ladino?* he asked himself. He was now compelled to know more about this person that he thought he'd known so well before.

*Well, I might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb,* Ian thought and went over to Rachel's bureau. On top of the bureau was a picture frame laying face-down. Turning it over, he saw that it was empty. Nor were there any other pictures or picture frames in Rachel's bedroom, just as there were none in the rest of the apartment.

Opening the top drawer of the bureau, Ian discovered a drawer-full of Rachel's panties. They were all white. Becoming aroused by his previous night's encounter, he impulsively picked up a pair and crushed them to his nostrils, inhaling the lingering scent of Rachel's body, in spite of her having washed them recently. It was only then that he saw the note that she had tucked under the top pair. The note read: 'Ian, you're bad!'

Ian turned beet-red with shame! "Damn!" he exclaimed aloud. Very carefully, he put her panties back in the drawer and tried to arrange them as they had been, with the note still under the top pair. But as he did so, he failed to notice the piece of white thread that had been placed strategically by Rachel on top of the top pair. Still smarting with embarrassment, Ian quickly left Rachel's bedroom, closing the door behind himself. Picking up his overnight bag in the living room, he slunk out the front door, fearing that she would return before he left and guess his secret.

\*\*\*

For the rest of the week, Ian was busy getting settled into his new apartment and meeting members of his own department, including the Department Head. But it was Friday now and all week he had been thinking of his encounter with Rachel the previous Friday night and was looking forward to a repeat performance as soon as possible. Unfortunately, he had failed to get her telephone number at the time. But by waiting in the faculty parking lot all Friday afternoon, he was able to 'coincidentally' bump into her as she was pulling out of the faculty parking lot.

"Rachel," Ian called and sprinted over to her car when he saw her. There was a young handsome negro sitting beside her in the car. He nodded and grinned at Ian, his beautiful white teeth contrasting his black skin and jet-black hair.

"Hi Rachel," Ian said slightly out of breath and hoping she was not aware of his snooping around her apartment the previous Saturday morning. "I never did thank you properly for letting me stay at your place last Friday night."

"Hi Ian," Rachel replied, sounding a little embarrassed. "*No problema.* What are friends for? Gotta go," she said before Ian could broach the subject of seeing her again. "Keep in touch," she called out over her shoulder and sped off not bothering to introduce him to her companion.

After that, Ian made no effort to find Rachel's telephone number and call her. Nor did he try to 'accidentally' bump into her again on campus. For each time

that he saw her, which was always at a distance, she was with the same negro guy that he had seen her with in the parking lot. And whenever he saw them together, he could feel the gorge rise in his throat. *I guess she prefers negro men to white men*, he shrugged with feigned indifference and plunged himself even more into preparation for his first class.

June 28, 1971

It was Ian's first lecture of the new semester. As his students filed into the lecture theatre, it was almost in total darkness, except for the dim outline of a very large projection screen at the front of the room. Ian heard a girl groan "Not another movie!" and then giggle "Cut that out!" as her boyfriend goosed her from behind.

The students had no sooner reached their seats when 'Thus Spake Zarathustra' the famous musical score from the movie 'A Space Odyssey 2001' began. The room was still dark. As the music began to play, a disembodied voice began to speak from the darkness:

*"In the beginning Higgs created the heaven and the earth."*

The screen remained blank.

*"And the earth was without form and void."*

The screen remained blank but the music grew a little louder.

*"And darkness was upon the face of the deep."*

Again, the music grew louder but the screen still remained blank.

*"And the Spirit of Higgs moved upon the face of the waters."*

A small but distinct black dot appeared in the center of the screen.

*"And Higgs said 'Let there be light'. And there was light."*

the voice thundered as the music reached its' crescendo.

Suddenly the screen at the front of the room erupted into a myriad of different colored light particles, streaming out from the center of the screen as if enveloping the entire room. "So began the origin of the universe" Ian whispered reverently.

For a moment, there was absolute silence in the room as each student shared Ian's recreation of the origin of the universe. He shut off the music and projector and switched on the stage lights.

"Good day class. My name is Ian Campbell. You all may call me 'Ian'. I will be your lecturer for this course, which I believe is 'Astronomy 101'. Is that correct?"

The very young but good-looking blond girl in the front row whose boyfriend had goosed her, nodded in awed agreement.

"I understand that this is also a first-year undergraduate course in Astronomy. Correct?" Again, the girl nodded in agreement, her mouth still open.

"How many of you have ever taken a course in Astronomy before?" Ian asked inquisitively. No one put up their hand.

"Good" Ian said. "Because you can forget whatever your high-school Physics teachers taught you about gravity and all that Newtonian crap. Instead, I'm going take you all for one hell of a ride through the physics of the universe for the next four months –from the 'big-bang' to the 'small-whimper'." Ian then plunged immediately into explaining to the class the first six minutes of the universe's existence. It took him almost an hour.

At the end of the lecture, he was surrounded by a roomful of excited students.

"Sir, that is one of the best lectures that I've ever listened to," one student

said.

“Wow!” said another.

“Who’s Higgs\*?” asked a third.

[ \*In 1965, physicist Peter Higgs proposed that the whole universe is permeated by a special field. As certain virtual particles move through space, they travel through this field, interact with it and with each other, acquire mass and hence existence as real particles.]

With a puzzled look on her face, the good-looking blond girl said, “I thought God created the universe.”

Ian beamed. He had accomplished what he had wanted to do with his first lecture, which was to stimulate some initial interest in his subject and looked forward to fielding more student’s questions. But glancing at his wristwatch, he could see that he was going to be late for his next lecture which was half-way across the campus.

Reluctantly, he said “Look, everybody, I’d really like to stay and answer some of your questions, but right now I’ve got to get to my next lecture and so do all of you. So, we’d better pack it in for the time being. But all or any of you are welcome to make an appointment with me anytime to discuss any questions that you might have concerning what we talk about in my classes. Okay?”

He left the room, feeling really good about his first lecture.

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Within two weeks after his first lecture, Ian got a phone call from the Dean’s secretary indicating that he wished to see him ‘at his earliest possible opportunity.’ His earliest possible opportunity was then, so informed her that he was on his way to see the Dean as requested and strolled over to Dean Smith’s office, wondering what he wished to see him about as they weren’t supposed to meet officially until August when the university was to have a cocktail party for new faculty members.

It was obvious that Dean Smith couldn’t want to see him about his one-night stand with Rachel, because to Ian’s knowledge no one knew anything about it. Besides, it was no one else’s business what two consenting faculty members did in the privacy of one of their living quarters -as long as they were discrete about it.

And it couldn’t have been anything to do with his teaching because, as far as he was concerned, it had been flawless. In fact, he was already becoming a big hit with a lot of the science students on campus and his lectures were beginning to fill to overflowing with unregistered students.

It might have something to do with the young, good-looking, but dumb, blonde girl in his ‘Astronomy 101’ class who had a crush on him and was pursuing him. But he had become a lot smarter after he had met, had sex with, married and divorced Candy and he wasn’t about to repeat the same mistake twice. Besides Sheila wasn’t at all like Candy. Sheila was very young, very naïve, probably still a virgin, and one of his students. And Ian had resolved from the beginning never to have sex with any of his students. Instead, after Candy, he

had made a point of always meeting and carrying on his sexual affairs off-campus and with more mature, single, professional women, who like himself were only interested in sex and nothing else. It was much more convenient that way because such arrangements did not interfere with his focus on becoming the 'best damned' university professor that he could become.

Entering the college administration building, Ian introduced himself to the Dean's secretary. Following her directions, he walked down the hall to the Dean's office where he rapped on the door. It opened and Ian was greeted by a small, elderly-looking, balding, bespectacled gentleman.

Glancing furtively, up and down the corridor, the elderly man said "Come in, come in," and whisked Ian inside. Once he had Ian inside, he quickly shut the door, but not before taking one more anxious look up and down the hall.

Turning to Ian, the Dean, for that is who the gentleman was, shook Ian's hand and said. "Hello Ian, thank you for coming. I'm Dean Smith. We haven't met officially yet. My meeting with you wasn't supposed to happen until we have our welcoming party for new faculty members in August, but I've heard so much about you, I just had to meet you ahead of time."

Clearing his throat nervously, he went on. "Please sit down," motioning to the comfortable leather chair beside the door and across from his desk. Walking behind the desk, he sat down, leaned forward over his desk and arched his fingers together in front of his body, the heels of his hands resting on the edge of the desk. Ian positioned himself comfortably in the leather chair in front of the desk and leaned back, waiting for the Dean to begin.

The Dean cleared his throat again and began. "To begin with, Ian, I want to say that we are really pleased to have you at our university. Your credentials in Physics are impeccable and I was particularly impressed with the argument that you made in your thesis that you wrote at Berkeley on the origin of the universe, although I can't say that I really understood it."

Ian's face lit up with the compliment. "Thank you, sir. When you're trying to be number three to people like Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose you try harder," he grinned.

The Dean coughed and cleared his throat again. "Well, yes of course...", he began. "But the truth is, Ian, we have a bit of a problem."

"Oh? What seems to be the problem?" asked Ian, a bit confused and leaning forward. "Is it my teaching?"

"No... and well, yes.... Its' not about the knowledge of your subject that seems to be the problem -it's about your teaching style."

"What do you mean, 'my teaching style'," asked Ian with a puzzled look. "I've been packing the little buggers, pardon my language, into my classes like sardines."

"Well that's part of the problem, Ian. You see, a lot of science students are beginning to skip other classes just so they can attend yours, and others want to transfer into your class immediately. A lot of professors are beginning to get upset about you stealing their students. Can't you teach a little differently?"

For a minute, Ian thought that the Dean was joking. But no, Dean Smith sat there with a very grave face. "Excuse me," Ian said. "Did I hear you correctly? Are you asking me to be less than the best teacher that I can be in



order to discourage students from attending my classes?”

The Dean's face reddened with embarrassment. “No, not exactly,” he responded defensively. “What I'm asking you to do is to change the way in which you present the content of the course to your students.”

“In what way?” Ian asked, politely, but still a little confused.

“Well, to begin with, Ian, it might have helped if you had not photocopied copies of your Ph.D. thesis entitled ‘God is a Quantum Fluctuation’ and handed them out to some of your students.”

“And why not?” challenged Ian.

“Well for one thing, a lot of parents have been complaining about what you appear to be teaching their children.”

“Just what do I ‘appear to be teaching their children’?” Ian paraphrasing what the Dean had just said, getting a little angry.

“Well some parents are complaining that you are using your role as a scientist to teach ‘creationism’.”

“And the other parents?”

“They are complaining that you are using your role as a scientist to spread atheism,” the Dean replied with a straight face.

Ian could not control himself. He burst out laughing. He knew only too well of the controversy which, after almost five hundred years, was still raging between religion and science. The battle had been going on from the time of Galileo and was still going on. The ‘creationists’ still held to the belief that a ‘God’, or some kind of anthropomorphic super-intelligence, had created the earth exactly as described in ‘Genesis’, the first book of the Old Testament, and that human beings were created uniquely ‘in the image’ of this God and apart from all other organisms. Atheists, on the other hand, believed that no God or super-intelligence created the universe and that it not only happened *ex nihilo*\* and that all living organisms, including humans, evolved from one single-celled organism.

[ \*Literally ‘from nothing’ ]

He unconsciously, physically shook his head in disbelief. *The stupid bastards on both sides of the argument can't see that ‘creationism’ and ‘evolution’ are the verso sides of the same coin.* “Sorry!” Ian apologized. “I just can't help myself,” as he laughed. “It's just too funny,” he said, and burst out laughing again. The Dean sat there in embarrassed silence. After he had finally stopped laughing, Ian said “When I first came to your office, I thought that you were going to tell me that I was a poor teacher -not that it seems to matter, considering all the incompetent teachers that we seem to have on campus.”

“Ian, that's not fair,” retorted the Dean. “We have some really fine professors teaching here, such as Ms. Danan. And besides, all our professors have tenure. They have complete academic freedom. We couldn't fire any of them for their beliefs, even if we wanted to.”

“That's right! And I guess you can't fire me for the same reason!” Ian retorted with a bit of anger in his voice. “But I will tell you what I will do sir,” he compromised in a softer tone of voice, before the Dean realized that he had

been checkmated. "I will try to stop mixing my metaphors when I speak of the universe."

The Dean heaved a sigh of relief. "That's all I ask, Ian. You don't know how difficult it is to try to keep all our alumni happy enough so that they will continue to support our university financially."

"No problem sir," Ian said as he got up to leave. "Is there anything else that you wish to discuss?" and turned to leave the room, thinking that the interview was at an end.

Again, coughing with embarrassment, Dean Smith said in a timid voice. "Well, there is something else I want to discuss with you, Ian. It's a matter of a young blonde girl that you have in your class."

Turning around, Ian said "You mean Sheila?" recalling her first name. "What about her?" he asked defensively.

"Yes, Sheila. I understand that she has a crush on you. She thinks that you are the world's greatest person, let alone the world's greatest teacher. It would be very easy to take advantage of a young girl like her, as I suspect some male professors do with their female students."

"What do you think I am?" bristled Ian. "Sheila's not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but she is a wonderful, sweet, innocent, child. I know that she has a crush on me, but I would never betray her trust."

"Thank you for saying that, Ian" the Dean said, tears welling in his eyes. "She's my wife's daughter from a previous marriage. And don't worry," he went on in a choking voice. "I will defend your academic freedom to the death."

August 13, 1971

It was now the middle of August and Ian was at the Dean's party, the purpose of which was to welcome new faculty members to the university. He was standing off in a corner by himself, with a glass of iced Coke in his hand. *Jesus! I hate parties!* he fumed. In addition to having to be there, he also had to get all dressed up in 'his monkey suit'. He had just met the Dean, formally this time, who had gushed all over him in front of everyone, pretending to meet him for the first time. Ian was now waiting for the first opportunity to escape unobtrusively and get back to the lab where he felt more comfortable.

Rachel was also at the Dean's party, representing her department. Ian had seen her when she had come into the room with the negro guy that he always saw her with and he had made a point of avoiding them. Rachel and her companion had temporarily separated and she was now alone.

"Hey, I hear that you're a big hit on campus," Rachel said as she sidled up to Ian, a glass of red wine in her hand.

"Oh, hi," he said without enthusiasm.

"Well, you don't seem to be very happy about it," Rachel said, referring to his popularity.

Ian shrugged his shoulders, feigning disinterest, "It's okay, I guess."

"I haven't heard from you lately," Rachel said with a slight reproach in her voice.

"I know that you've been very busy lately. I've been pretty busy myself," Ian lied, still smarting from the time that she had rejected him in the parking lot.

"Oh!" Rachel sounded a little disappointed. "Well, I'm having a little party for a few personal friends of mine next Friday night at my apartment and I'd like you to come if you can make it."

"I'll see what I can do," Ian said noncommittally. *If you think that I'm going to play second-fiddle to some negro, you're nuts!* he thought. He pretended to look at his watch. "Well, gotta go. Got a hot date tonight," he lied again, winked knowingly and made a beeline for the nearest exit.

"See you Ian," Rachel called after him, a little wistfully.

Ian waved over his shoulder as he left. Outside and away from the building, he suddenly felt a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach, leaned against the nearest tree he could find and vomited.

August 20, 1971

The party that Rachel had arranged to introduce her friends to Ian was almost over. "I don't know where Ian could be, everybody," she said. "I did want all of you to meet him. You'll like him when you do."

Just then, Ian staggered drunkenly into her apartment. Rachel rushed over to him with a slight frown on her face. During the time that she had known him as an undergraduate, she had never seen him drunk. In fact, she could never ever remember seeing him drink alcohol of any kind. Trying to hide her concern, she said, "Hi Ian. I'm so glad that you're finally here. I want you to meet some of my friends."

Taking Ian's arm, Rachel walked him over to a handsome young negro man. "To begin with Ian, I want you to meet a very special person in my life, - Doron. Doron is from Morocco." Rachel put her other arm around Doron's waist. Ian stared at Doron belligerently. It was the same negro guy that Ian always saw Rachel with. *He's gotta be her lover*, he concluded and began to get angry.

"Hi ya, Doron. Glad to meet ya. Howsh it hanging?" he slurred. He burped, probably deliberately, and grudgingly shook Doron's outstretched hand.

Doron frowned and turned to Rachel speaking inquisitively to her in Ladino\*

[ \*A Judeo-Spanish language spoken by Sephardic Jews.]

In the same language, Rachel replied "Ian said 'How are you?'" and glared at Ian.

"Hey, shpeak white," Ian interjected before Doron could try to respond to him in what little of the English language he knew. Lorna, a friend of Rachel, and the man to whom she was speaking began to look very uncomfortable.

"Ian, could I speak to you for a moment in the kitchen, please," Rachel asked without bothering to introduce him to anyone else.

"Sure, Rache," Ian said and weaved into the small kitchen adjoining the dining room. "Whad'ya want Rache?" he asked, trying to kiss her in front of everyone and stealing a sly glance at Doron.

Fending him off, Rachel lowered her voice and whispered. "Ian, I've never seen you like this before. I don't know why you got drunk and why you are acting the way that you are but I've invited you here tonight to meet a few friends of mine. Please behave yourself. We can talk about what's bothering you tomorrow. And please don't call me Rache."

"I alwish behave myself. You see to that, don't you Rache?" Ian said sarcastically, emphasizing the word 'Rache' and lurched back into the living room.

Trying to hide her pique with a smile, Rachel followed Ian in, took him by the arm again, and guided him over to Lorna. "Ian, I'd like you to meet my best friend, Lorna. Lorna's a doctor. Lorna, this is the person that I've told you so much about, -Ian."

"Hi doc," Ian said throwing his arm around Lorna's shoulder. "Any fren of

Rachel's is a fren of mine," he slurred, breathing his alcoholic fumes into her face. "Sho whad'ya think of the rectum as a whole?"

Lorna shrugged his arm off in disgust.

"That's it! The party's over, Ian," Rachel said. "Time to go!"

"But I jush got here," he protested.

"I said, 'It's time to go, Ian,'" Rachel said firmly.

"'Bye everybody,'" he said, flopping himself down on the couch and waving his hand like a little kid, waiting for them to leave.

"I meant you, Ian," Rachel said, emphasizing the word 'you'.

"But I wanna stay behind and have sex with you after everywun leaves," he blurted out.

Rachel's face went beet-red. She had never been so humiliated in her life - at least not in front of her new friends. "How dare you speak to me like that! Get out of my apartment," she screamed, pointing to the door.

"Whash the matter, Rache? Don't you wan anyone to know how much you like sex?" Ian taunted her, and winked knowingly at Doron.

Doron stared back blankly. He knew that Ian and Rachel were arguing about something, but damned if he knew what. He shrugged his shoulders and raised his hands questioningly. Ian took it as a sign of an admission of guilt.

Crushed with embarrassment, Rachel's shoulders sagged with defeat. "You think that you know all of the answers, don't you, Ian?" she said, wearily.

"Ashh a matta a fact, I do!" Ian hiccupped, his right hand beating his chest.

"Ian, *mi verdadero amor*, you don't even know the questions to ask, let alone the answers," Rachel said, shaking her head sadly, tears welling in her eyes. "You didn't then", referring to their undergraduate years together, "and you don't now."

His ego wounded, Ian struck out blindly. "Well, I do know that you're a slut, Rachel. You were then, and you are now!"

It was then that Rachel slapped Ian across the face as hard as she could.

Shaking his head groggily to clear it, as much from the effects of the alcohol as from the slap, Ian saw for a moment his father standing over him, grinning and saying "Git oop. Git oop. Sae oi kin knock yee back doon agin."

By now, Ian had begun to sober up, primarily as a result of the slap, but it was too late. His body only knew that it was being physically attacked and instinctively it reacted. The hatred for his father welled up from deep inside his battered psyche.

Lurching up from the couch, he roared, "Why you little bitch," and held up his fist, shaking it in Rachel's face as his father had in his own face so often.

"Nobody, but nobody hits me," he raged and drew his fist back to strike her.

Rachel cringed, waiting for Ian's blows to rain upon her as had her stepfather's. But Ian could not bring himself to strike her. In frustration, he smashed his fist into the wall inches away from her head, leaving a large dent in the plastered wallboard and possibly an injured hand for himself. Tears, not of pain but of frustration, welled in Ian's eyes as he stumbled blindly out of her apartment. "Go to your negro lover then," he shouted over his shoulder.

Everyone in the room stood in embarrassed silence. Rachel began to cry uncontrollably and fled into her bedroom, slamming the door behind her.

For a moment, Lorna moved as if to go to the bedroom to console Rachel, but instead, ran after Ian. Running to catch up to him as he strode angrily across the campus lawn in front of Rachel's apartment, Lorna yelled "Wait Ian. I want to talk to you."

Ian ignored her and kept on walking. "What's wrong, Ian?" Lorna shouted, "Are you afraid of me?"

Ian froze in his tracks, wheeled around and with fists clenched confronted her. His earlier adrenaline rush had made him sober now but his anger remained. "I am afraid of no man," he said angrily. "What do you want?" he demanded.

"I want to talk to you."

"Look, I've got nothing to say to you, or to Rachel, if that's who sent you."

"No, Rachel didn't send me. She's too proud for that."

"Well, I've certainly got nothing to say to you then. And certainly nothing to say to that negro guy that's she's been having sex with."

Lorna reddened at Ian's rhetoric. "That's one of the reasons I want to talk to you Ian," Lorna said angrily. "You god-damned white so-called intellectuals make me laugh. You pretend that you're not racist. Rachel told me how you used to go on all those freedom marches in your undergraduate years with that prissy professor lover of yours and how you would come back and brag to everyone how you helped save all those poor negro people from white racism. But the truth is, Ian, now that you and your elitist white friends are faced with competing with negros like Doron, you're afraid that they might be better than you in some things and get what you seem to think belongs to you simply because the color of your skin. You hypocrites make me sick!"

"I am not a racist," protested Ian, thinking of the many negro friends that he had made on the freedom march that he had attended with Marina. "And I was not having sex with Miss Kahn. She was just a good friend," he insisted.

"Yeah, right, Ian. And if you expect me to believe that, I'll bet that you've got some swamp land in Florida that you'd like to sell to me," retorted Lorna.

"No, it's true," Ian insisted again. "Marina was just a good friend. Don't you believe that a man and a woman can be just good friends?"

"That's my point, Ian. Why can't you believe that Rachel and Doron are just good friends?"

"Well, I see them together all the time."

"That's true. But Rachel and Doron are together a lot because they work together. Rachel is involved in genetic research here at the university and Doron is a visiting medical doctor from Morocco. Both Rachel and Doron are Sephardic Jews and are working together to try to find a cure for genetic diseases unique to Sephardic Jews."

"Sephardic Jews?" Ian queried. "I've never heard of them. I know that Rachel is Jewish, but that's all I know about her religion."

"Well," explained Lorna. "There are two main groups of Jews in the world -Ashkenazi Jews and Sephardic Jews. Both groups have not only evolved differently religiously and culturally but also genetically, because of isolation from each other and inbreeding amongst their own group. The result is that both groups suffer from genetic diseases rare in non-Jews but different from each other's. For reasons that I won't go into here, a lot of genetic research has been

done with respect to the Ashkenazi Jews but very little for Sephardic Jews. As I said, Rachel is Sephardic and she wants to spend her life trying to find a way to genetically fix defective genes of Sephardic Jews.”

“Then what’s Doron’s role in all this then?” Ian demanded to know.

“It’s Doron’s DNA that they are experimenting with. He has CTX, a rare Sephardic genetic disease.”

“What’s CTX?”

“I’m not sure,” Lorna replied. “I just know that Doron and other Sephardic Jews with the same disease will die at a very early age if they don’t find a cure for it. Doron has been lucky, so far.”

“Well, I still think that he’s having sex with Rachel,” Ian insisted, toning down his rhetoric a bit, but still upset about the possibility.

“What makes you think that Rachel is having sex with Doron?” Lorna asked with interest, but quickly added, “Not that I think that there’s anything wrong with a white woman having sex with a negro.”

“Well, on a few nights when I had nothing else to do, I just happened to be driving past Rachel’s apartment when I saw her drive up in her car with Doron and go into her apartment building with him. On another occasion, I stayed up all night waiting for Doron to leave, so that I could speak to Rachel, but he didn’t leave until the next morning when I saw them come out of the apartment building together, laughing and joking.”

“Ian, for a scientist, you’re not very analytical at times, are you?” Lorna said, ignoring the fact that Ian had been spying on Rachel.

“What do you mean?” he bristled defensively.

“Well, did you ever consider that the reason that you see Doron going in and out of Rachel’s apartment building all the time is that he lives there, one floor above her.”

“Well, no,” Ian admitted, but hastened to add, “But she could still be having sex with him in his or her apartment.”

“No, she’s not!” Lorna exclaimed. “I am!”

“What?” Ian said, this time taken completely by surprise. “But Doron’s a negro,” he blurted out before he could catch himself.

“Whoops! Your latent racism is beginning to show again,” said Lorna, but this time laughed heartily.

“It’s not that, Lorna. It’s just that you’re so attractive.” Ian protested. “I’m sure that Doron is a very nice guy, but you could have just about any white male that you wanted.”

“Ian, Ian, Ian,” Lorna remonstrated, as if to a small child. “Love doesn’t work that way. ‘When Love beckons to you, follow him, though his ways may be hard and steep’” she said, quoting the poet Kahlil Gibran. “The fact that Doron is a negro has nothing to do with the fact that I love him. And why do I love Doron, Ian? I love Doron because he loves me,” she said, emphasizing the word ‘me’. “And when two people truly love each other, a lot of things in life, including the color of one’s skin, no longer seem to be very important.”

Ian gulped, realizing the fool that he had made of himself. “Jeez, I’m sorry for saying all those nasty things about Doron, Lorna. I feel like a perfect fool,” he admitted.

“Hey, nobody’s perfect,” she responded sarcastically.

Ian hung his head in shame. “I’m sorry for jumping to conclusions Lorna, but whenever I see Doron and Rachel together, I get a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach thinking of her having sex with him and want to rush over there and physically take her away from him. I guess I’m a racist after all.”

Lorna laughed “No, Ian you’re not a racist. You would have felt that way about any man, white or black who you thought was having sex with Rachel. You see, Ian, you’re in love with her.”

“I don’t love Rachel” Ian protested. “I could never love any woman as promiscuous as Rachel. And even if I did love her, I know that she doesn’t love me. She never has. When we were undergraduates, she would put out for just about every guy on campus, but not for me, other than the one time she offered herself to me one night when she was drunk.”

“You mean the time that she was raped?”

“Rachel told you about that?” Ian asked surprised.

“Rachel has told me everything about herself. You see, I’m not just Rachel’s friend, I’m also her psychiatrist. I think that we’d better meet somewhere privately where I can talk to you about her. There are some things that I think that you should know.”



August 21, 1971  
1:00 a.m.

Lorna and Ian were sitting at the back of an all-night coffee shop each with a cup of coffee in front of them. Lorna had not returned to the party but instead had arranged to meet Ian at 'Joe's Java'. By then, it was about one o'clock in the morning and the coffee-shop was almost empty.

Lorna began the conversation by saying. "Ian, let me begin by stating to you that I am Rachel's psychiatrist as well as her friend, and as her friend I want to tell you some things about her so that you might better understand her. However, as her psychiatrist, I am not allowed to discuss her specific case with you because of patient-client privilege."

Ian began to say "Then why the hell did you bring me here?" when Lorna held up her hand, interrupting him, and went on. "So, let me tell you a story instead."

Ian nodded. "Okay," he said, understanding the subterfuge that Lorna was using.

"It may take a while to tell you this story," she continued. "So please be patient, because it's a long but very important story and I only get to tell it to you once."

Ian nodded again in agreement. "Okay, shoot," he said and leaned forward to listen.

Lorna leaned forward also, put both elbows on the table, covered her face with both hands, closed her eyes and began to speak as if reciting a history lesson. "Once upon a time in a faraway country, that shall remain nameless for reasons that will become apparent to you later in the story, there lived a beautiful, young sixteen-year-old Sephardic Jewish girl. Her Jewish ancestors had settled in that country after they had been expelled from Spain in 1492. You know about the Spanish Galut\*, or expulsion of the Spanish Jews in 1492, don't you?" Lorna paused to inquire, glancing up.

[ \*Hebrew: 'Exile'. The Spanish word 'galut' differs from the Greek word 'diaspora' in that some Jewish diaspora were voluntary migrations – the Spanish Galut in 1492 AD was not.]

"Well, not really," confessed Ian, who had spent most of his white Anglo-Saxon Protestant life in a small rural town, relatively isolated from the history of the rest of the world, with his nose stuck in science books. "But I have heard of the Diaspora or expulsion of the Jews from Judea during Roman times," he said, partially defending his ignorance.

Lorna took a sip of coffee, closed her eyes, put both hands to her forehead again and went on. "Well there have been many Jewish diaspora\*, some voluntarily and some involuntarily, but for the sake of brevity, suffice it to say that by 1400 A.D., most of the Jews in what is now Israel had scattered or been forced to scatter to not only other Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries but even to European countries as well.

[ \*Greek: 'Dispersion, scattering'. Lorna is correct. The origin of Jewish diasporas (plural) began with the settling of Jewish colonies outside Palestine following the Babylonian exile of the Jews of Judea in 586 BCE.]

“The result was that because of isolation from each other, by the end of the Middle Ages all Jews had become divided into two distinct regional and cultural groups -Jews who had settled mainly in Europe and Jews who had settled in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and in Spain. The Jews who settled in Europe eventually became known as Ashkenazi Jews. The Jews that settled in the Mediterranean area and elsewhere eventually became known as Sephardic Jews.”

She continued her history lesson, her eyes still closed so she could concentrate. “Originally, one country that a lot of Jews went to during the early diasporas was Iberia, or as it is called today, Spain. Although Spain eventually became part of the Roman Empire, Jews thought that they would be a little safer from Roman persecution there than in the Middle East. And they were left unmolested for the most part, with the exception of some legal restrictions. And by the third century A.D., Jewish communities in Spain weren’t doing too badly in spite of their limited rights as Roman citizens.

“But after the fall of the Roman Empire early in the fifth century, the pagan Visigoths invaded Spain. Eventually these barbarians adopted Christianity as their main religion and things became uncertain for the Jews. One local ruler would decree that all Jews convert to his new-found Christian religion or be expelled; another local ruler, though Christian, might be opposed to compulsory baptism of Jews, and so on. But the Jewish religion hung on stubbornly to its existence. Collectively, things began to get progressively worse for the Jews when in 636 A.D. it was proposed by the new Pope in Rome that only Catholics be allowed to remain in Spain. Fortunately, this demand was not put into effect immediately and there was a reprieve for the Jews in Spain until the Moors, or Muslims, invaded Spain in 711 A.D.

“Under the Moors, the lives of Spanish Jews changed very much for the better. Because Spain had been a Christian country and because the Jewish inhabitants were not Christian, under the Moors they became trusted more than the conquered Christians and were even given preferential treatment. As a result, Spanish Jews were able to accumulate land, wealth, hold public office, become doctors and so on. In fact, they were so successful under the Moors, the next two hundred years became known as ‘The Golden Age of Spanish Jewry’.

“However, unfortunately for the Jews in Spain, this golden age did not last. By 974 A.D. Christian Europe had begun to recapture Spain from the Moors and by 1300 A.D. had succeeded. By then, the population of the Jews in Spain had grown to about one-half million in numbers and there were at least 120 towns and villages that were predominately Jewish. But once again, the new Christian rulers began to systematically persecute the Jews in the name of the now powerful Catholic Church.

“The Jews in Spain continued to limp along under these worsening conditions until 1492 A.D., when the new rulers of a united Spain, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, decided that all of Spain should become Catholic

and issued an edict declaring that all Jews in Spain had to convert to Catholicism or leave the country. A lot of Jews chose to convert to Christianity rather than to forfeit their wealth, but many more chose to leave Spain rather than give up their religion.

[ \*The Spanish Jews who converted to Christianity became known as ‘Conversos’. The Spanish Jews who only pretended to convert to Christianity, but continued to practice Judaism secretly, became known as ‘Marranos’. ]

“Some of the Jews who left Spain went to the country where my story takes place because, at the time, that country was still ruled by Muslims and was not anti-Semitic. And for over four hundred years, these Sephardic Jews, as they were now called because they had come from Spain, lived in their new country under Moslem rule with very little prejudice toward them by the Muslim inhabitants. But early in the twentieth century, the part of the country in which these Jews lived became part of another country whose main religion was Christianity. As a result of mass migration of Christians into this new region, Jews began to experience some overt discrimination against them once again. But this time, the Jews had no other countries to go to.

“By 1939, the third largest city of the country in which my story takes place, had a Jewish population of about 50,000 men, women and children out of a total of 240,000 citizens. The Sephardic community there had always kept a low economic profile and although almost twenty percent of the population of the city was Jewish, there was little evidence of a lot of wealth among them, as in some Ashkenazi communities in Western Europe and the United States. The majority of the Jews in this community were as their ancestors had been; shopkeepers, craftsmen, manual laborers and peddlers. There was no need for the Christian majority to be jealous of them or feel threatened by them. As a result, the Jews in that city had every reason to believe that they were safe from at least collective persecution by the state government. But all that changed when the Nazis invaded that country in 1941.

“When the Nazis occupied the country in which the city of which I speak existed, they immediately set up a puppet government. This puppet government complied fully with every anti-Semitic directive that the occupying Nazis gave them, partially because of some already latent anti-Semitism, and partially out of fear of reprisals against the non-Jewish population if they did not.

“Upon occupation of the city to which I am referring, the *rab mayor*, or Chief Rabbi, who was the spiritual leader of the Jewish community there, was taken away and never heard from again. He was replaced by a more secular *juez mayor* who was interested only in the protection of himself and his family. This ‘mayor of all the Jews’ was instructed to make a list of all Jews living in the city and file it with the local chief of police, which he did.

“In 1942, the same puppet government issued new identity cards to all citizens of the country. These new identity cards included the religion of the bearer, from the information that the Jewish mayor had provided to the authorities.

“After issuing these identity cards which identified people by religion,

things happened very quickly. In January 1943, two German staff members arrived in the city in which the 50,000 Jews lived to arrange for the deportation of all of them to another Jewish community in Europe -at least that's what the Jewish mayor told them.

"In February of the same year, Jewish ghettos in the city were established. This was done by 'checker-boarding' different parts of the city which literally imprisoned large numbers of Jews. The boundaries of these ghettos were drawn up on a map by the same Jewish mayor on the demand of the Nazis.

"On March 15, the inhabitants of the first of these prison ghettos were forced to leave their city by boxcar. The Jewish mayor told them their destination was Krakow, Poland where they would be integrated into a Jewish community there. Unbeknown to them and the Jewish mayor, their real destination was the extermination camp at Auschwitz. The Jews in Krakow had already been sent to Auschwitz ahead of them."

It was at this juncture in Lorna's narrative that Ian shuddered visibly. Lorna felt his shudder and looked up inquiringly, from her coffee cup into which she had been staring with downcast eyes. Tears were sliding silently down her cheeks.

"I've seen pictures of Auschwitz, Lorna," Ian said in a choked voice, remembering the civil rights workshops that he attended with Marina during which documentary films of the Holocaust had been shown.

"My grandparents were there, Ian," Lorna said, now weeping openly.

"Oh, Lorna," Ian moaned, feeling her pain. "I didn't know that you were Jewish."

"Yeah, I know I don't look Jewish," said Lorna, wanly. "I'm Ashkenazi."

"You don't have to go on, Lorna," Ian said gently.

"Yes I do, Ian. I must!"

Taking a serviette from its container and drying her eyes, Lorna went on bravely. "Well, anyway, the last deportation train left the city of which I speak, early in August 1943. By then, about 46,000 Jews of a population of 50,000 Jews had been deported and exterminated. Less than 4000 Jews in the whole country escaped. Some were able to get to southern Greece. A few other recent immigrants were able to reclaim their Italian citizenship and were eventually saved that way, because Mussolini never got around to deporting them before Italy was defeated by the Allies. Ironically, about 600 Jews were able to take advantage of a Spanish law passed in 1924 which provided a kind of protection for the descendants of Jews who had been compelled to leave Spain in 1492. General Franco of neutralist, but fascist Spain, invoked this law and asked his Nazi friends that these persons be exempt from deportation. The local German Military Commander compromised by sending these Jews to a concentration camp in Bergen-Belsen, Germany where only 369 survived the war."

Lorna continued, "The young and by now pregnant, 16-year-old, Sephardic girl who I mentioned at the beginning of the story was able to escape to Turkey. She was the wife of the Jewish mayor. Her husband had been able to smuggle her out of the country in early August 1943 and into Turkey before the last boxcar left for Auschwitz."

"What happened to him?"

"No one knows. Some people said that he died helping his wife escape. Some people said that he escaped to Spain. And some people said that he was in the last boxcar that left for Auschwitz."

Ian was now beginning to feel uneasy about what he was hearing. "What happened to his wife?" he asked suspiciously.

"As I said, she escaped to Turkey where she gave birth to a baby girl. From there, she and her baby managed to make it to the United States and settled in a city with a large Jewish population where she eventually remarried another Jew," Lorna explained.

"The baby was Rachel, wasn't it?" Ian demanded, beginning to see where the story was going.

"I'm not at liberty to say, Ian," Lorna replied. "As I told you in the beginning it's just a story I'm telling you -an allegory if you like."

"Did the baby girl ever find out about her real father?" Ian asked apprehensively.

"Yes,"

"It's Rachel you're talking about, isn't it?" insisted Ian. "I've got to go to her," he said, starting to get up.

"Ian, you'd better sit down. I haven't finished my story."

"Jesus Christ!" exclaimed Ian. "Is there more? It can't get any worse than this."

"Yes it can!" said Lorna. "You'd better sit down and have another cup of coffee while I tell you the rest of the story."

Ian slumped back down into his seat, his mind already reeling from what Lorna had possibly revealed to him. Lorna motioned the waitress over and ordered two more cups of black coffee. When they arrived, she said, "Drink your coffee, Ian. You're going to need it."

Ian gulped down some of the scalding hot coffee, wanting to be fully awake for what was about to come. Lorna took a sip of hers, looked around to see that there was no one within earshot and continued her story.

"Well, as I've already told you, the beautiful, young 16-year-old girl whose husband had betrayed his Jewish community came to America with her little baby girl. There she met another much older Jewish man. He was a poor Ashkenazi Jew and she was Sephardic. Normally, Ashkenazi Jews do not marry Sephardic Jews because a lot of Ashkenazi Jews think that they're better than Sephardic Jews. I won't go into all that racist bullshit right now, Ian, but that was the first strike against the baby girl's mother. The second strike against her was that the baby was not his and he considered the baby's mother to be 'used goods'. The only reason that he married her in the first place was for purposes of sex and to wait on him hand and foot. But what really brought everything to a head, Ian, was that the baby girl's mother, in a moment of guilt, told her new husband that her first husband had been responsible for the deportation of at least 45,000 Jews to Auschwitz. When she told her new husband this, he just couldn't handle it. He himself had been in the Jewish concentration camp in Auschwitz and saw what went on. He had witnessed the death of thousands of Jews there. In fact, in order to save his own life, he had become a *sonderkommando* by manning the crematoria and even became an unarmed

Jewish prison guard or *kapo* for a while, until he himself had been earmarked for the gas chamber.”

“What’s a *sonderkommando*, Lorna?”

“*Sonderkommandos* were members of the work detail in Auschwitz whose job it was to transfer the corpses from the gas chambers to the crematoria. Every three or four months, each *sonderkommando* team would be executed and a new team created from new prisoners arriving at the camp. Fortunately for him, the Allies arrived just in time to save him. But unfortunately for him, after the war he couldn’t handle the guilt that he felt as a result of the role that he had played in the extermination of his own race. He was angry at the baby girl’s father for having betrayed his fellow Jews during the war but at the same time felt guilty for having been a Jewish coward himself. He was too ashamed to discuss his dilemma with anyone, including the local rabbi and as a result began to drink a little to ease his anger and shame. When that didn’t work, he began to drink even more. As he began to drink excessively, he lost his job and his wife had to get a job to support them. He began to resent her for that as well. In addition to this, he was not a particularly handsome man and was overweight and bald. He began to accuse his young, beautiful wife of having an affair with one of her co-workers and began to beat her whenever he was drunk, which was often. Eventually his wife could take it no more,” said Lorna and paused.

“What did she do?” asked Ian.

“She committed suicide.”

“Oh my God!” Ian said. “No wonder Rachel was so screwed up at university”

“That’s not why Rachel was so screwed up at university,” Lorna blurted out angrily. “It was because after her mother committed suicide, her stepfather began to sexually abuse her!”

It was too late! Lorna had let the cat out of the bag by referring to Rachel by name.

“I’ll kill that son-of-a-bitch,” Ian said starting to get up again. “No young child deserves ever to be treated like that!”

“Sit down Ian,” Lorna said wearily, “The son-of-a-bitch is already dead.”

Ian feared the worst. “Don’t tell me that Rachel killed him,” Ian said, half-hoping that she had.

“No,” said Lorna. “Rachel left home when she was sixteen years old and never spoke to her stepfather again. She got a job as a waitress and put herself through high-school at night. She graduated with the highest marks in the whole city of New York and was given a four-year scholarship to attend this university where you first met her. Her stepfather drank himself to death during the same period of time.”

“Good! I hope the son-of-a-bitch rots in hell. It’s no wonder that she was so promiscuous in university.”

“No...” said Lorna slowly. “That’s not exactly it, Ian. She was not promiscuous in university.”

“What do you mean? Of course she was!” Ian responded, challenging her statement. “But it’s okay. I can understand why she became a nymphomaniac as a result of sexual abuse,” he conceded. “I’ve heard that women can become

nymphomaniacs from having too much sex," he explained, thinking of Martha and Candy.

"Ian," Lorna grimaced. "I don't know where you get your information about women, but Rachel is not a nymphomaniac. She's frigid."

"What?" Ian asked, thinking that he had not heard Lorna, correctly.

"I said Rachel is frigid."

"I thought that a woman who's frigid does not want to have sex," Ian said, with a puzzled look on his face.

"That's correct."

"Well, wait a minute then! "Rachel can't be frigid. What about all those guys that she had sex with when she was going to university?"

"She didn't have any sex with guys when she was going to university. Whoever told you that?"

"Well... all the guys."

"What guys?"

"All the guys she used to go out with. They used to brag to me about all the things that she used to do to them."

"And you believed them, Ian?" Lorna said, chastising him lightly.

"Well yes," Ian said defensively. "What was I supposed to think when I repeatedly heard the same rumors about her?"

"Ian, you should know by now that's what guys say to save face when they are not successful with seducing a woman. Rachel was not having sex with anybody at university. She's been frigid since puberty as the result of the repeated rapes by her step-father. As a result of these repeated rapes she developed a pathological dislike for men which manifested itself in what we politely refer to in the psychiatric profession as 'a sex tease'."

"Hmm..." Ian mused "Well, I can certainly understand her hating men! But what about the time that she got drunk, got raped and then offered herself to me after I prevented her from committing suicide and took her home?"

"Yes, I'm aware of that incident. Rachel and I had a very interesting conversation about it during one of our therapy sessions. Apparently, what happened was that she went out with a guy who got her drunk and then raped her because she had led him to believe that she would have sex with him. She only went out with him and all those other guys, in the first place, in an attempt to make you jealous. She offered herself to you when she was drunk because, believe it or not, Ian, you are the only man that Rachel has ever loved. She told me in therapy that she was attracted to you the moment that she first saw you in our student lounge six years ago and fell in love you as she got to know you better. I'm also convinced that had you had sex with her that night when she offered herself to you and showed her a little more love, it would have cured her of her frigidity. I went as far as to tell her as much during one of our sessions. But she said that she was glad that you didn't make love to her even though she wanted you to because you might have thought that she was just another slut and would have had nothing to do with her afterwards, even as a friend. She also said that she would rather spend the rest of her life being alone and frigid than to be with and have sex with someone who didn't love her."

"Then you mean to tell me that she's had no sex with a man for six years"

asked Ian with astonishment. "I don't believe it!"

"Yes, it's true. Rachel has had sex with no man since the last time that she was raped, other than with you the first night you arrived here on our campus."

"She told you about that as well?" Ian asked surprised.

"Yes, of course. I told you that she tells me everything."

Ian's ego demanded to know what had been going on in Rachel's mind that night. "If you don't mind me asking, what did she say about that night?"

"She told me that when she found out that you were coming to this university to teach, she became determined to consummate her love for you, with you, if only once, and then go back to spending the rest of her life alone."

Ian felt a little embarrassed about asking the next question. "Well..., to use her expression, how did she feel when she 'consummated' her love for me with me?"

You mean, "How were you in bed?"

"Not exactly," Ian stammered, reddening slightly. "I mean, how did she feel about being with me?"

"She said that it was the greatest feeling that she'd had in her life. She said that with you it didn't feel dirty like it had with her stepfather or the student who raped her. She also said that she knew that in your heart you loved her as much as she loved you, but that you were afraid to show it because you must have been hurt somehow when you were a young child, as she had been."

"Rachel said that?" Ian asked, thinking of his own childhood.

"Yes."

Ian raised his defensive shields. "Hmm," he said, getting up to leave. "Everything that you've told tonight sure gives one something to think about doesn't it? Thank you for sharing it with me, Lorna," he said noncommittally. He reached out to shake Lorna's hand goodbye. Lorna remained seated.

"Well I've already told you more than I had planned to, Ian. Rachel swore me to secrecy to all of the things that I've told you, but after that situation a few hours ago, my heart tells me that you need to know how she feels about you. I know that I've been professionally unethical by telling you all this, but frankly, I would rather risk losing my license than to risk you never knowing how much she loves you."

"Well, I've got to go, Lorna," Ian said again, noncommittally. "I've got a big day tomorrow," he lied, knowing that he had the next few days off, and began walking toward the door. He needed time to think.

He was about half-way to the door when Lorna called out. "Ian, there's something else I need to tell you," trying to hold back what she had to say.

Ian's mind was already reeling from information overload. "What is it now?" he replied irritably.

"Rachel may be carrying your child."

Ian froze momentarily, half-turned as if to say something but instead turned and walked out the door.

"Shit!" exclaimed Lorna.



August 21, 1971  
12:30 p.m.

Tired from being awake for the last twenty-four hours and from having driven the more than four hundred miles from 'Joe's Java', Ian yawned, sat down, and propped himself against the trunk of the tree. From his perch, he watched the valley below shimmer in the summer heat. The seemingly miniature fields between the escarpment and the town was a checkerboard of different hues of green. An occasional field was colored yellow indicating a crop of ripe rapeseed or mustard. Beyond the fields, an automobile, followed by a cloud of dust, drove silently along the dirt road at the edge of town. In the background, insects droned busily doing whatever it was that they did in the warm sun. Ian slept.

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It was The Great Depression. Tired, hungry, thirsty and discouraged, Ian plodded down the long dusty dirt road that would eventually lead to the farmhouse that sheltered his family. He had been hundreds of miles away looking for work with which to support them. The road lay before him without a house in sight, its sides overgrown with brown sun-burnt grass. The dried unplowed stubble of the fields was separated from the roadway by broken-down rusted wire fencing, its cedar fence posts bleached grey by the sun. The odd gust of wind kicked up small whirlwinds of dust on the road reminding him of the seven-year drought that had been visited upon the land and turning it into a dust-bowl.

As Ian continued to trudge home, a ditty that he had learned while on the road came to mind. It was something that he had heard sung around the campfire in the many 'hobo jungles' that he had frequented in his search for work. He began to sing the song softly, reminding himself of the uncertainty of his future:

"My pocket's empty  
"My pocket's full  
"My glass is empty  
"My glass is full  
"My plate is empty  
"My plate is full  
"My stomach's empty  
"My stomach's full"...

adding new lines to the ditty as he went along, as was the custom.

Eyes down, repeating the words over and over again and continuing to trudge trance-like down the road, Ian glanced up to see, in the distance, his wife and baby daughter standing waiting to greet him. Instantly, and without thought, new lines to the song leapt to his lips. They were:

"My heart is empty.  
"My heart is full.

"My heart is full.  
"My heart is full!"

and it was at that moment Ian's heart exploded with an indescribable sensation that his body had never experienced before –awake or asleep. He felt as if his whole body had dissolved into its fundamental particles -no, its' very 'essence' - and streamed outward to merge with every other 'essence' of the universe. And at that moment, all the pain, all the bitterness and all the frustration that he had carried with him during his lifetime vanished.

[ \*This phenomena has been experienced by many people, including the author and can only be described as 'ineffable'. Religious people go as far as to describe the sensation as 'the ineffable love of God'.]

Ian awoke with a start! It was late afternoon. *I must have slept for hours*, he thought. He had been exhausted by his long drive. *What a dream! I either just had a heart-attack or an epiphany\** he half-joked to himself.

[ \* 'Epiphany': A glimpse of the numinous. 'Numinous': the psychic existence of a deity.]

A slight rustling nearby startled him. He looked up to see not more than twenty-five feet away from him, a doe with large beautiful brown eyes, and a baby fawn watching him attentively. Ian and the doe looked deeply into each other's eyes. And for a moment, he wasn't sure whether he was a man looking at a deer or a deer looking at a man! The doe turned and walked quietly back into the woods, followed by her baby fawn.

Ian sat there for a long time thinking about his dream, the doe, and his past life, as he watched the sun inch closer to the horizon and begin to sink slowly into the western sea. An excerpt from one of the poems that Martha had read to him at that very spot over ten years before came to mind:

*'We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time!'*

For the first time in his life, Ian knew what he had been looking for. He stretched. *God, it was great to be alive!* He marveled and laughed at the irony of what he had just said to himself. Rising, he strode to the edge of the precipice, threw out his arms and shouted to no one in particular, "I am!" His voice echoed throughout the valley and the universe. Making his way down the side of the mountain in the gathering gloam, he got into his car, drove to the edge of the town, stopped at the first phone booth that he could find and made a long-distance phone call.

A voice answered at the other end. "Hello?"  
"Hello, this is Ian," he replied. "I love you."  
"I know," Rachel said.

September 1971

“Hello Rabbi. I’m Ian Campbell and I’m going to marry Rachel Danan.”  
Ian said defiantly.

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After telephoning Rachel from Bay’s End, Ian had immediately driven back to the university, went directly to Rachel's apartment where he knew that he would find her and embracing her with tears streaming down his face had cried “Rachel, Rachel, please forgive me for having been such a fool. I didn’t know that you loved me all these years and I didn’t realize until a few hours ago how much I loved you.”

Resting his sobbing head on her shoulder and her arm around him, Rachel had patted Ian’s back as you would console a small child, and comforted him. “Shhh... Shhh... It’s okay Ian. Everything is going to be okay now, *mi verdadero amor*” she said, addressing him with the same term of endearment that she had used with him at her party but which he had not understood at the time.

[ \*Ladino: ‘My true love’ ]

After their reconciliation, Ian and Rachel became inseparable. With the exception of the classes that they taught and their own laboratory research, they were always together. They visited Rachel’s friends together, at which times Ian repeatedly apologized to them for making such a fool of himself at Rachel’s party. They ate together. They slept together, huddled together in their bed cocoon, insulated from the rest of the world. And when huddled together in their cocoon, they whispered words of endearment to each other and shared not only their painful pasts, their present thoughts but dreams of their future together, including getting married and raising their unborn child. It was during these intimate moments that Rachel not only admitted to Ian that she had loved him from the first moment that she had seen him six years before but also confessed that it was his picture that she kept in the empty picture frame that he had discovered in her bedroom. She giggled like a young school-girl when he confessed to rummaging through her panty drawer, and she revealed to him how she had known about it at the time. Lorna, Rachel’s psychiatrist friend, would have labelled them ‘co-dependent’ if she had not known how much they loved each other and the degree to which they wanted to make up for all the years that they had missed being together.

When Ian first broached the subject of marriage to Rachel, she was afraid to contact her rabbi knowing that her marriage to Ian would be denied because he was not Jewish. And under the circumstances, she was prepared to live common-law with him indefinitely. But Ian was adamant and insisted on meeting the rabbi.

[ \*Ian could have suggested to Rachel that she convert to Christianity, but knew that he could never deny Rachel her heritage.]

The first time that Rachel asked her rabbi to meet Ian, the rabbi had refused, stating that Rachel's marriage to a Gentile\* was impossible and suggested that she find 'a nice young Jewish boy' instead. [ \*Gentile: a Christian word for a non-Jew.]

When Rachel begged the rabbi a second time, to at least meet Ian and told him this time that she was pregnant, the rabbi reluctantly agreed.

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"As I said rabbi, I'm marrying Rachel," Ian repeated evenly.

"I'm afraid that's impossible," responded the rabbi firmly.

"Why is it impossible?" Ian demanded to know.

"Because you're not Jewish," insisted the rabbi.

"Why must I be Jewish to marry Rachel?" Ian continued doggedly.

"What's wrong with a Gentile marrying a Jewess as long as she's allowed to practice her own religion and raise her children as Jews, which we are prepared to do?"

The rabbi had prepared his defense. Reaching for the Torah\* beside him, he flipped it open to a well-marked page and read:

*'When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.'*

[ \*Torah: The Jewish Bible, consisting of the first five books of the Old Testament]

"So, as you can see from the last sentence, Mr. Campbell, our religion specifically prohibits marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew. Moreover, Rachel's child will be Jewish whether you like it or not because any child born to a Jewish woman is automatically Jewish," he added smugly.

[ \*Interestingly enough, any child sired by a male Jew is not automatically Jewish unless the mother is also Jewish. The reason for this is because one can never be one hundred percent certain of a child's paternity.]

"And my decision to not marry you and Rachel is final," he stated emphatically, got up and left the room.

The next day, Ian was back. He had gone home and explained the situation to Rachel who had burst into tears. Biting his lip in anger, Ian had got into his car and driven to the campus library where he borrowed an English copy of the *Torah* and sat up reading parts of it all night. In the morning, he insisted on meeting the rabbi again.

This time, Ian was more diplomatic. "Rabbi," he began humbly. "To begin with, I want to apologize for being so aggressive yesterday. But I have no

intention of abandoning Rachel and our baby. If you don't marry Rachel and me, we may have to live common-law for the rest of our lives. We may even have to raise our child to be Christian," he lied, hoping to intimidate the rabbi a little. "I've read parts of the *Torah* and I think I understand where you and your religion are coming from. But perhaps you can enlighten me a little more about Judaism."

Pleased with the opportunity to explain his religion to a non-Jew, the rabbi softened a little, knowing that he was now in control of the situation, smiled, relaxed, and replied, "Of course, Ian. What do you wish to know?"

"Well", Ian began, "As I said, I read of a bit of the *Torah* last night, and I've heard references to the *Talmud* but what is the difference between the *Torah* and the *Talmud*?"

"The *Torah*," the rabbi lectured, "refers to the first five books of your Old Testament which are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, although we name them differently. These five books are believed to be the literal word of God. We Jews believe that God taught the oral *Torah* to Moses and Moses taught it to others and so on until about 200 C.E. when it was compiled and written down in a document called the *Mishna*. Between 200 C.E. and 500 C.E., the *Mishna* was studied by generations of rabbis and their interpretations written down in a series of books that became known as the *Gemara*. The *Mishna* when combined with the *Gemara* is known as the *Talmud*."

"That's really interesting", mused Ian, rubbing his chin. "But, in the event of an apparent disagreement, which of the two documents, the written *Torah* or the *Talmud*, would be more likely to be correct?" he asked innocently.

"Well, they're both correct. "But I guess if there was a demonstrated discrepancy between the two documents, the written *Torah* would be more correct because it was dictated to Moses by God four thousand years ago and the *Talmud* is an interpretation of the written *Torah* by inspired rabbis," the rabbi confessed. "Why do you ask?"

"So, the written *Torah* is literally the word of God as opposed to the *Talmud*, which is the result of centuries of human interpretation of the written *Torah*?" Ian asked, clarifying the relationship of the two words and ignoring the rabbi's question.

"That's correct." replied the rabbi. Why do you ask?", repeating his question.

"Well, what you read to me from the *Torah* yesterday, seems to indicate that only a Jew can only marry another Jew. Is that correct?"

"That's correct," said the Rabbi.

"Then I wish to become a Jew so that I can marry Rachel."

"You can't convert to Judaism," the rabbi replied.

This time, Ian had come prepared. "What do you mean I can't convert to Judaism?" he protested. "I don't know what the *Talmud* says about it, but I do know from reading parts of the *Torah* that it allows Gentiles to convert to Judaism." Taking from the pocket of his jacket the copy of the *Torah* that he had borrowed, he turned to a passage that he had marked and read:

"On the last day of Moses' life, he gathered all the Jewish people together who

*had wandered with him in the desert. There, God spoke to the entire nation of Israel, and said, 'Not with you alone do I seal this covenant, but with whoever is here, standing with us today before the Almighty our God, and with whoever is not here with us today,'*

emphasizing the last nine words of the passage. "I interpret those last nine words of that passage to mean that God was offering a covenant to all mankind, including all future generations, whether they were there or not." Ian concluded.

The rabbi didn't flinch. *What does this goy\* think I am - chopped liverwurst?* he thought. *I haven't spent years in a Yeshiva\*\* studying Torah and Talmud minutiae for nothing.*

[ \*A yiddish word for a non-Jew. Used by some Jews pejoratively. \*\*Yeshiva: a school to train Jewish rabbis.]

"I'm well aware of that passage, Ian," he replied a little testily and yet surprised that Ian had stumbled upon it. "That's one interpretation of it. I'm also aware of all the other passages in the *Torah*, the *Mishna* and the *Gemara* that refer to the possibility of non-Jews converting to Judaism. But you cannot convert to Judaism and therefore marry Rachel because the *Talmud* says that you must be 'sincere' to convert to Judaism and you are not sincere," he stated emphatically.

"I may be wrong, but I don't think that the *Torah* says anything about having to be 'sincere' to convert to Judaism. I think that it uses the word 'righteous' instead, and you did say that when in disagreement, the *Torah* was more likely to be correct than the *Talmud* didn't you?" Ian countered. "But let's ignore the semantic differences between the two words for the moment. What do you mean that I'm not sincere? Of course, I'm sincere. I know how much Rachel's religion means to her. I love her more than I've loved anything else in my life. I will do whatever it takes to make her happy and if it means converting to Judaism and raise our children to be Jews in order to marry her, I will do so. What more can your religion ask of me?"

"That's not what we mean by being 'sincere'. By being 'sincere' we Jews mean that you must truly wish to become a Jew because of what you believe."

"Was Sarai sincere?" Ian countered.

"Sarai? Sarai who?"

"Abram's wife."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, as you know Rabbi, Abram was the first Jew, and if Abram was the first Jew then Sarai, his wife, must have subsequently converted to Judaism, correct?" asked Ian, not bothering to point out the fact that the *Torah* did not specifically say that she did.\*

[ \*Before creating the Jewish religion, Abram's name meant 'patriarch' (high father) and after his conversion, he became known as Abraham which meant 'father of a multitude'. Before she converted, Sarai's name meant 'mockery' because she mocked Yahweh when he said that she would become the mother of a mighty nation. After she converted, her name was changed to Sarah which means 'princess'

implying a cofounder of a mighty nation.]

“Yes...,” said the rabbi carefully, wondering where Ian’s argument was going.

“Well, did Sarai convert to Judaism because she was Abram’s wife and loved him or did she convert to Judaism because she believed in Abram’s God?” Before the rabbi could answer, Ian went on. “Because it sounds to me as if I’m in almost exactly the same situation that Sarai was in. It is my position that Sarai converted to Judaism because she loved Abram and was married to him, not because she instantly understood the nature of his new religion.” Before the rabbi could interrupt, Ian continued, “Rabbi, in your heart, you know that the *Torah* is filled with dozens of examples of non-Jews converting to Judaism because they loved a Jew. And what’s wrong with that, if the person who converts to Judaism sincerely accepts one hundred percent the Jewish way of life? If you allow me to convert, I promise you that I will be the best Jew ever!” he begged.

Sensing the despair in Ian’s voice, the rabbi said. “Let me think about it. Come back tomorrow.”

That night, the rabbi reread parts of the *Torah* and *Talmud* and thought long and hard about the enormous responsibility placed upon his shoulders. He could refuse to allow Ian to convert to Judaism which meant that Rachel and Ian could not be married in a Jewish ceremony. If they did get married under those circumstances, it would have to be a Christian wedding or a civil union. If it were a Christian wedding or a civil union, he knew that only twenty-eight percent of the children of such marriages were raised as Jews. On the other hand, if he allowed Ian to convert to Judaism and marry Rachel, then there was a possibility that Ian might backslide or renege on his promise to be ‘the best Jew ever’. But at the same time, he also knew that in households in which both partners were practicing Jews, at least seventy-percent of the children got some Jewish education and married a greater percentage of Jews than children of mixed marriages. His duty which was to try to preserve Judaism to the best of his ability, was clear. The solution was obvious -that he ensure that Ian become and remain ‘the best Jew ever’! He also looked up the definitions of the word ‘sincere’\* and ‘righteous’\*\* in the dictionary before going to bed.

[ \*Sincere: honest; without hypocrisy. \*\*Righteous: Conforming to the standard of the Divine or moral law.]

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It was the next morning. Ian sat impatiently in the rabbi’s office waiting for the rabbi to say something.

“Good morning, Ian,” the rabbi began. “I’ve reread parts of the *Torah* and *Talmud* and have thought a lot about your request to convert to Judaism. I know how much you must love Rachel and I agree that there are many instances in the *Torah* in which non-Jews converted to Judaism because they loved a Jew. And I agree that the term ‘righteous’ is perhaps a better adjective to describe a possible convert to Judaism than ‘sincere’. But I’m convinced that in all of the Biblical

cases of conversion, the individuals who converted to Judaism were already predisposed to Jewish beliefs, that is to say, were 'righteous', and therefore have decided that you must convince me that your religious beliefs do not conflict with the fundamental tenets of Judaism, - that is to say, that, in addition to 'sincere', you also are 'righteous' and therefore worthy of becoming a Jew."

"Okay, rabbi. I've got nothing to hide. Ask me anything that you wish and I will respond sincerely," Ian grinned, giving the rabbi a little dig on the use of the word 'sincerely'.

The rabbi smiled to himself in spite of the seriousness of the situation.

*This one's a real fighter and just might be a keeper!* he thought. *Well I might as well cut to the chase,* he concluded, because the next few questions that he was about to ask Ian would determine the ultimate outcome of their discussion.

"Who was Jesus Christ?" the rabbi suddenly demanded to know.

Ian remained unfazed. "Truthfully, rabbi?"

"Yes, truthfully."

"Promise you won't be offended by what I'm about to say?" Ian asked apprehensively.

"No." the rabbi replied, fearing the worst.

Ian gulped, took a deep breath and blurted out. "I think that Jesus Christ was the illegitimate son of a thirteen-year old Jewish girl named Mary and his father was a Jewish priest, a Roman soldier or a young Jewish boy. My personal belief is that his father was a Jewish priest.

The rabbi breathed a sigh of relief - Ian had passed the first hurdle. He thought that Ian was going to tell him that he thought that Jesus was the real Jewish messiah which would have destroyed any chance of Ian ever being able to convert to Judaism! He already knew that one story in the Talmud implied that Jesus was the bastard son of a Roman soldier named Pantera. But this was the first time that he had heard of the idea that Jesus might have been the illegitimate son of a Jewish priest!

The rabbi leaned forward with interest. "Go on," he encouraged Ian.

"Well, my theory is that Mary became impregnated by a Jewish priest, while serving in the temple, and when the other temple priests discovered this, they conspired to have Joseph, an aging widower, marry her."

Stroking his beard, the rabbi said. "That's an interesting possibility. Personally, I don't believe that scenario, but go on."

"Well, Jesus was a lot younger than his step-brothers who were carpenters or stone-masons and was probably taken under the wing of the temple priest who unbeknown to him was his real father. I think that this is the reason why Jesus was so knowledgeable about the Jewish religion by the time that he was twelve years old." Ian looked at the rabbi for confirmation. The rabbi said nothing, but gestured for Ian to continue.

Ian cleared his throat and went on. "The Bible says nothing about Jesus for the next twenty years and it is my belief that during these twenty years, he may have been living in an Essene community or with his cousin, John the Baptist in the wilderness. It was during this time that he may have become convinced that he was the real Jewish messiah."

It was at this point, the rabbi held up his hand to stop Ian. "I think I've



heard enough about Jesus. I think that I can safely say that you do not believe that Jesus was the son of God, but for my own interest, what leads you to believe that he was not the Jewish messiah?"

"Well if Jesus had been the real messiah, he would have been able to fulfill the Jewish prophecies instead of being crucified." Ian reasoned.

"So, I guess you're not really a Christian then?" the rabbi queried.

"I guess not. Not if it means having to believe that Jesus was literally the son of God, that he was the Jewish messiah and that he arose from the dead after his crucifixion. As well, my mother died giving me birth and I was never baptized as a Christian because my father never went to Church. But I did read the Bible a lot for my own interest," he added, hoping to get a few more 'brownie points'.

The rabbi stroked his beard again and grunted his approval. "Do you believe in God?" he asked.

Ian hesitated, knowing that his answer could also affect the rabbi's decision to allow him to convert. "Yes and no, rabbi," he said cautiously. When I was a child, I found it very difficult to believe in God as some old man with a beard somewhere up in the sky. By the time that I had become a teenager, I found it impossible to believe in an anthropomorphic\* God at all and became an atheist.

[ \*Anthropomorphic: having human qualities such as love, hate, etc.]

"When I went to university and became a cosmologist I remained an atheist because I thought that I had all the answers. And I did, up until a few weeks ago when I had what one would call an epiphany. Since then I'm not so sure anymore."

The rabbi leaned forward again with interest. "Tell me more about your epiphany," he said, and Ian told him about his dream and his experience with the deer at Bay's End. "If God exists, It is beyond our understanding." Ian concluded upon telling the rabbi his story, emphasizing the word 'It'.

"It's interesting that you should say that," the rabbi mused, "because although we Jews tend to attribute human-like qualities to God, when asked by Moses who he was, God only referred to himself as *ehyeh asher ehyeh*. This Hebrew phrase when translated into English means 'I am what I am' but it can also be interpreted to mean 'I am beyond your understanding', which is surprisingly similar to your own understanding of God.

"One last question. If you could only obey one of God's commandments which one would it be? Take your time," he cautioned.

Ian was sure that this was a trick question. He thought long and hard. He knew about the Ten Commandments and vaguely remembered reading in the distant past all kinds of other commandments in the Bible that God had exhorted the Jews to obey. He knew that he should answer 'All of them' but he had been asked to name only one. He thought some more, and from somewhere deep within the right temporal lobe of the cerebral cortex of his brain, a voice spoke as though through him "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”

[ \*Mark 12:30. A similar passage is quoted in Deuteronomy 6:5 but the rabbi was unaware that Ian was quoting the Christian version of the Bible. Not that it mattered.]

For a moment, the rabbi was taken aback. The question had been a trick question. Ian should have said ‘All of them’ because that is what would have been expected from reading the *Talmud*. But quickly regaining control of himself, he asked a bit puzzled, “Why did you choose to quote that commandment, Ian?”

Ian thought for a moment about the words that had involuntarily burst from his lips, then said, “Well rabbi, I guess if one were to truly love God with all their heart, with all their soul and with all their mind and with all their strength then they would know the mind of God and would therefore willingly obey all of God’s commandments without having to be told what they were.”

The rabbi was impressed with the logic of Ian’s answer -not that he necessarily agreed with it! If Ian had been born a Jew, he probably could have become a great rabbi. He also made a mental note to discuss Ian’s statement with other rabbis when given an opportunity. As it was, he was convinced that Ian, if given a chance to convert, would become a stalwart defender of Judaism. He heaved a sigh of relief. He had done his duty. He had tried to dissuade Ian from wanting to convert to Judaism three times as required by *halakhic* law\*.

[ \*Jewish law, based on the *Torah* as interpreted by the *Talmud*]

He had also questioned Ian orally and in his opinion found him to be ‘sincere’ and ‘righteous’ enough to convert to Judaism. Besides, Ian would still have to pass a more stringent oral examination by the *Beit Din* (Rabbinical Court) before being allowed to convert to Judaism officially.

“Look, Ian,” he said. “Even if I agree to sponsor you becoming a Jew, and I’m not saying that I will, becoming a Jew is a very long process and a lot more difficult than you can imagine. After all, it took Judaism six thousand years to become the religion that it has become.”

“I can handle it.” Ian said, thinking of Rachel. With Rachel at his side, he could handle anything!

“It won’t be easy,” the rabbi warned. “The following are all the things that you must agree to do. To begin with, you must agree to be circumcised.”\*

[ \*Some Gentiles are circumcised at birth to prevent infections later in life. Ian was not.]

“Ouch!” Ian interjected. “But I’ll do it,” he said without further hesitation.

“You’ll also have to be baptized.”

“Okay.”

“Thirdly, you must adopt a Hebrew name, at least for religious occasions.”

“That’s easy. My middle name is David.”

“You’ll also have to obey one hundred and sixty-three Jewish

commandments.”

“I don’t know what they are rabbi, but tell me what they are and I’ll follow them religiously,” Ian said flippantly.

“I’m serious about that.”

“So am I rabbi. Tell me what they are and I will try to follow them,” Ian said, this time emphasizing the word ‘try’.

“That’s better, Ian. No Jew can be perfect in the practice of his or her religion and all that we ask is that if you become a Jew that you promise to try to obey them as do the rest of us. There are also six hundred and thirteen *mitzvot*, most of which you and Rachel must follow in your lives.”

“What’s a *mitzvot*?”

“*Mitzvot* is the plural of *mitzvah*. A *mitzvah* is a rule as to how a Jew should conduct his or her life.”

“How many rules did you say that I would have to follow?” asked Ian, forgetting the number.

“Hypothetically, six hundred and thirteen,” repeated the rabbi; “two hundred and forty-eight ‘do’s’ and three hundred and sixty-five ‘don’ts’.”

“That seems like a lot of rules to remember. I don’t know that I will be able to remember them all.”

“It’s okay Ian. Don’t worry too much about it. Most of these rules -such as the possession of slaves, no longer apply. But if we allow you to convert then we would expect you to follow whatever *mitzvah* rules that our denomination of Judaism expects of you. Okay?”

“Okay,” Ian said, not caring what they were specifically. He only cared about being with Rachel. Besides, he knew that whatever the rules were, he would follow them to the letter if it meant being with Rachel for the rest of his life.

“Next, you must agree to raise your children to be Jewish,” the rabbi emphasized. “As I said before, any children that you and Rachel have would automatically be Jews anyway, but what I want from you is a commitment to consciously raise your children to be Jewish. That means obeying the *mitzvot*, following all Jewish customs, observing all Jewish holy days and attending the synagogue with your family regularly.”

“I will rabbi,” Ian promised and again meant it. He was already looking forward to a home with Rachel and children with her.

“Seventh, according to Jewish law, you must refrain from having sex with Rachel until you have become a Jew.”

“Oh, oh!” Ian laughed. “I don’t know if I am going to be able to convert after all, Rabbi. I love her so much! Just joking,” he added quickly. “I guess that I can wait for a few weeks if necessary.”

“The bad news is, Ian that you will have to wait at least one year before being allowed to become a Jew so that you will not be able to have sex with Rachel during that time. And during that year, you must study, be tested and follow all the rules of Judaism including attending *shul*” (Synagogue)

Ian gulped. He knew that he would have no difficulty in doing almost everything that the rabbi insisted upon, but he wasn’t sure that he could refrain

from showing Rachel physically how much he loved her.

"I'll be honest with you rabbi. I know that I can do all the other things that you demand of me but I don't know if I can go a whole year without physically loving Rachel."

"You will, if you love her," replied the rabbi. "Besides we might be able to 'fast-track' you, seeing that Rachel is already pregnant. It would be preferable that her baby be born with two Jewish parents so as to avoid any possible problems in the future."

"I'll do it then! When do we begin?"

"Tomorrow evening," the rabbi responded. Rachel was already four months pregnant and he did not want to waste a moment. "But just a few more questions before I agree. I know that Rachel's parents are dead. But what do your parents think about you converting to Judaism?"

"As I said earlier, my mother died giving me birth. And I don't have anything to do with my father anymore," Ian stated. He smiled to himself and thought *I hope that the self-centered, egotistical, hypocritical, little son-of-a-bitch finds out that I converted and that it kills him!*

"What about Christian customs, Ian. You know that that you'll have to give up Christmas, don't you?"

Ian laughed humorlessly. "That's easy. My father was too cheap to celebrate Christmas, rabbi. The only Christmas present that he ever bought me was a hockey stick. And when I asked him 'Where's the puck?' he said. 'What puck? I bought you that hockey stick so that you can knock the huge icicles off the eaves of the roof. Now get the hell out there and do it.'"

"Well that solves that problem then doesn't it Ian," the rabbi laughed. "What about other Christian customs such as Easter?"

"Well as I said before Rabbi," Ian said, this time a bit sadly. "I don't believe that Jesus was the son of God or even the Jewish messiah. It was unfortunate for him that he was just another one of the hundreds of young Jewish men who believed that they were the true Jewish messiah and were subsequently put to death. I think that he himself realized that he was not the true messiah when one of the last things that he said on the cross was 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"

"Yes," agreed the rabbi, "sad but true." "Well," he concluded, getting up and extending his hand to Ian, "in the light of everything that we've just discussed I agree to sponsor your conversion to Judaism. Congratulations."

\*\*\*

"Well what did the rabbi say, Ian," Rachel asked apprehensively when Ian returned home.

"Well, I had a hard time convincing the rabbi to allow me to convert to Judaism in order to marry you, Rachel, but I think what really convinced him to do so was when I told him that the Torah only says that a Jew cannot marry a Hittite, a Girgashite, an Amorite, a Canaanite, a Perizzite, a Hivite, or a Jebusite and makes no reference to an American," he grinned.

"Ian you're bad!" Rachel blushed, throwing her arms around his neck and

hugged him passionately. Ian felt her tears roll silently down the nape of his neck.

September 1971 – February 1972

Ian pushed himself away from the edge of the *mikveh*<sup>\*</sup>, submerged his nude body fully into the tank of fresh rainwater and spread his fingers and legs open as wide as possible, as he had been instructed, so that as many of his body parts as possible, including his head, were exposed to the baptismal waters of the *mikveh*.

[<sup>\*</sup> The *mikveh* is a ritual bath designed for the Jewish rite of purification. The *mikveh* is not merely a pool of water; it must be composed of stationary, not flowing water, and must contain a certain percentage of water derived from a natural source, such as a lake, an ocean, or rain. This part of the conversion process is called *tevillah*.]

For a moment, Ian began to feel a little guilty about having to agree to follow a belief system and perform rituals which he would have until now, along with every other religion, considered to be a bunch of superstitious nonsense. He had known that all religions attempt to discover the nature of whatever it was that created the Universe and what it is that our role is to be as part of that Universe. But now that he knew what that was, it little mattered how he manifested his understanding of it and because Rachel chose to understand it though Judaism, then he chose to do so also through the same metaphor. Why? Because he loved Rachel and she loved him!

Ian had also followed the rest of the process of becoming converted to Judaism to the letter for the same reason. He had already convinced Rabbi Kohen that not only was he sincere in wishing to become a Jew but righteous also and Rabbi Kohen had agreed to be his sponsor. He had spent the last few months studying Judaism intensively in order to be able to pass the examination of the *Beit Din*<sup>\*</sup> of his knowledge of Judaism.

[<sup>\*</sup> Formal conversion to Judaism requires authorization by a Jewish court. This three-man *Beit Din* represents symbolically, the whole Jewish people into which the convert seeks entrance. It has the power to authorize or deny the application to join its ranks.]

Ian had also met with Rabbi Kohen regularly and fulfilled specific study assignments; he had attended conversion classes with Rachel where he learned about basic Jewish beliefs and religious practices such as prayer services, the history of the Jewish people, the Jewish home, Jewish holidays and the Holocaust. Rachel also taught him much of the same things at home. He had finally met with the *Beit Din* from the synagogue – one of which was Rabbi Kohen and passed their oral examination with flying colors, as evidenced by Rabbi Kohen's broad grin and secret wink at the end of it after which Ian took an oath to preserve and protect Judaism.

Ian had also gone through the painful process of being circumcised, called *hatafat dam brit*. He had not been circumcised as a baby and was given the option of skipping this part of conversion but insisted on it as well. When informed of this option by Rabbi Kohen, Ian's response had been "If it was good

enough for Abraham, then it's good enough for me!" which had impressed the *Beit Din* even more. When informed of the same option by Rachel, his laughing reply had been "Well, it doesn't look like I'll be using my dick for a while anyway, referring to the Rabbi's prohibition and her confinement, to which she had replied "Ian, you're bad!" and blushed.

It only remained for Ian to 'make an offering to the temple' through an act of charity; choose a Jewish name (which he already had – David) and be publicly accepted by Rachel's synagogue where he would stand in front the congregation and give a speech as to why he decided to convert to Judaism. After which they would be married as soon as possible.

March 5, 1972

It was Rachel and Ian's wedding day. It had only been six months before that Ian had first met the rabbi and during that six months he had converted to Judaism as required. Although Jewish custom normally required that betrothed Jewish couples wait a year before marrying, Rabbi Kohen had relented and agreed to allow Ian to convert to Judaism and to marry Rachel before their child was born. But he insisted that if Rachel and Ian were to be married in a Jewish ceremony, then everything had to be done according to Jewish custom with the exception of the betrothal stage which would take place just before their marriage.

[ \*Usually the betrothal or *kiddushin* and the marriage or *nisuin* of a young Jewish couple would routinely occur as much as a year apart, but it was decided that because of Rachel's pregnancy the two ceremonies would be performed together and as soon as possible.]

The week preceding their wedding Ian and Rachel did not see each other, as was the custom, but on the *Shabbat* (Sabbath) of the week prior to the wedding, Ian was allowed to recite a blessing or *ufruf* over the Torah in honor of his upcoming wedding. This was followed by a small celebration during which the congregation threw soft candy at Ian and Rachel to symbolize the sweetness of their imminent marriage.

The day before the wedding, both Ian and Rachel fasted. The day of the wedding, but before the wedding ceremony, a small group of Ian and Rachel's friends gathered together for the ceremony called the *bedeken*. Rachel was veiled as was the custom. When required to lift Rachel's veil in order to determine that he was marrying the correct person, Ian got a big laugh from the witnesses when he quipped "Yep, it's her alright!"

Immediately after Ian confirmed that he was indeed marrying the correct person, their two witnesses and the rabbi signed the *ketubah*. The *ketubah* was a legal document, traditionally written in Aramaic which described Ian's obligations to Rachel upon her becoming his wife and gave her legal status in the event of a divorce or his death. Not that Rachel cared about what was in the contract. But after their marriage, Rachel hung her *ketubah* proudly in the entrance to their home, not because it was the custom, but because of what Ian had added to it during the wedding ceremony.

The *kiddushin* part of the ceremony in front of the congregation began with Rachel approaching and circling Ian. Two blessings were then recited over wine. Ian placed a wedding ring on Rachel's finger and recited "Be sanctified to me with this ring in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel." After the *kiddushin* was completed, the *ketubah* that Ian and Rachel had signed about fifteen minutes before was read aloud by the rabbi.

Although Ian had complied fully with the twenty-five-hundred-year-old standard format of the *ketubah* originally presented to him, he had insisted on adding his own profession of love for Rachel which was his right under *halakhic* law. After the rabbi had read the standard part of the *ketubah* in Aramaic, Ian turned to Rachel and added in a clear voice in English:



“Also,  
*Entreat me not to leave thee,  
Or return from following after thee;  
For whither thou goest, I will go;  
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge;  
Thy people shall be my people,  
And thy God my God;  
Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried;  
The Lord do so to me, and more also,  
If ought but death part thee and me.*”

He then presented her with Marina’s locket which he had always carried with him. But now it had a picture of him and Rachel in it.

It was upon hearing this unconditional profession of love for her from Ian that Rachel had burst into tears and the rabbi had dropped his eyes in shame as he finally realized the enormity of Ian’s commitment to Rachel. Here was an infidel, an outsider, who like Ruth the Moabite, had chosen to give up whatever belief that he had about the existence of God to be with the person he loved. Some older members of the congregation coughed nervously with embarrassment.

Ian went over to Rachel, hugged her and whispered something into her ear. She burst out laughing, brightened considerably, and wiped the tears from her eyes.

Finally, the *nisuin* or actual marriage part of the ceremony began. Ian and Rachel stood beneath the *chuppah* which was held up by four poles. This canopy represented their new home together.

Following the reading of the *ketubah*, and while under the *chuppah*, the *Sheva Berakhot* (Seven Wedding Blessings) were sung in Hebrew in the presence of a *minyan* of ten adult Jewish male members of the synagogue. But Ian was much too busy beaming at Rachel to pay much attention to what the cantor was singing, even if he could have understood Hebrew. After being pronounced man and wife and drinking from the same wine glass, Ian crushed the glass with his right foot, while everybody cried ‘*Mazel Tov*’. [‘Good Luck’] Ian and Rachel then retired to a private room, symbolic of him bringing Rachel into his home.

As they entered their new ‘home’ together, Rachel laughed and whispered to Ian, “I wonder how everyone would have reacted had you, instead of quoting from Ruth, told me what great tits I had as you told me you should have!”

“I’m saving that for when we get inside that room.” Ian said, winking at her lecherously.

Rachel said, “Ian, you’re bad” and blushed.  
That night, Rachel’s water broke.

March 1972

Before they were married, Ian and Rachel had reveled in her pregnancy. Rachel had taken a leave of absence from her teaching position at the university but still kept in touch with Thomas who had taken over her genetic research temporarily. They still saw Lorna from time to time, but not as Rachel's therapist but as their very dear friend. Each time Lorna met Ian, she hugged him affectionately and whispered into his ear how happy Rachel looked now and how proud she was of him.

Rachel and Ian had moved in together before marriage but true to his word, he never had sex with her, even though she sometimes urged him to do so. Instead, whenever home, he had hovered around her like a protective angel, until she shooed him away with a dismissive "Ian, go grade your papers!" which she knew that he hated doing, often waiting until the last minute to do so because he was reluctant to see any of his students fail.

Together, in bed at night, Ian had kissed Rachel's swollen stretch-marked belly and with lips pressed against it whisper words of love to their unborn child. Ultrasound had revealed that the baby was a girl. Ian would have preferred a boy but he had always known that the baby would a girl because Rachel had wanted a baby girl. And it was Rachel's baby. It would always be Rachel's baby.

When the baby was born, they named her *Amata* which in Ladino means 'worthy of love'. Ian had been there at Amata's birth and watched her emerge from Rachel's swollen belly. It had been at that moment that he had felt one with the 'numinous' again as he had at 'Wabagowna'. Amata had been the 'spitting image' of Rachel. Although she had weighed only seven pounds, three ounces and was eighteen inches long -a bit small for a full-term baby when she was born, Amata had made up for her small size by her delicate features. Her dark hair and very light brown skin and the large brown eyes with which she had looked at Ian when he first held her, reminded him of the young fawn that he had seen at 'Wabagowna'.

But now within a few weeks of her birth, Amata was dead -struck down, ironically, by the same deadly Sephardic genetic mutation for which Rachel had been trying to find a cure\*.

[ \*This disease only manifests itself when two specific recessive genes are combined. This means that Ian must have had some kind of Jewish ancestry in his past –which is not unlikely considering that the first Jews settled in Scotland as early as 1190 AD. The unlikelihood of Ian's ancestry being Jewish was why Ian and Rachel never thought of being tested for the disease.]

1972 - 1978

Rachel had been devastated by Amata's unexpected death. At first, she blamed herself for it, citing the 'sinful' life that she herself had lived. It took a long time for Rachel, with the help of Lorna, to get over her guilt feelings. But she would never really fully recover from her loss of Amata. However, it did give Rachel some solace to have a pine tree planted in Israel for her and have her name added to 'The Children's Book' in Jerusalem.

Ian was heartbroken too but refused to weep in front of Rachel because he felt that it was important that he remain strong for her. To paraphrase the Buddhist teacher that he had studied with, years ago in San Francisco, he knew that 'Shit happens!' and he was determined to protect Rachel, for as long as he could, from whatever other 'shit' that the universe might throw at her.

If Ian wept, he wept privately. But when he wept, he wept for Rachel and for the rest of the world and not for himself. For he knew now how the universe worked and had accepted it, however reluctantly. He knew that there was no God as most people believed. The 'thing' that created the universe was not anthropomorphic, that is, possessing human qualities such as 'love' and 'hate'. Even if one accepted Anselm's simplistic, definition of God as 'that which no greater can be conceived', then this 'thing' would have to possess all human qualities as well as all other characteristics of the universe -and more. And therefore this 'thing', if it existed, would be also beyond good and evil as Nietzsche implied. Moreover if, according to Spinoza, God was a being of an infinite number of attributes of which thought was just one of them and that everything in the universe was 'deterministic' then humans had no such thing as 'free will'. But in Ian's opinion, the universe required no super-intelligence in order to be created and contrary to Spinoza's philosophy, mankind did possess the power of free-will as demonstrated by the process of evolution.

Theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich's concept of 'God' made a little more sense to him. If Ian understood him correctly, Tillich believed that when an organism, such as a human-being evolves to the point that it becomes aware of its own mortality, begins to wonder about its own origins, questions the reason for its own existence and worries about its own death, it thinks about the possibility of a creator or 'God'. Tillich defined the belief in the possibility of this kind of God as 'the ground of being' and believed that it exists de facto prior to an organism being aware of it and that the primary essence of this 'ground of being' is 'love'. While Ian saw Tillich's ideas as a possible way out his own philosophical dilemma, he believed that Tillich had no proof that such a 'ground of being' existed prior to humans 'discovering' it and even if such a 'ground of being' does exist, there is certainly no proof that it manifests itself as 'love'. As far as Ian was concerned, the term 'ground of being' was only a 'ontological necessity' to try to explain the reason for our existence. Moreover, in his opinion, the two additional 'necessary propositions' of 'pre-existence' and 'love' smacked too much of Christian influence on Tillich's philosophy.

No! Human belief in a God or even a 'ground of being' was a creation of man's mind and nothing else. Having crawled out of the primeval ooze and battled his way up the evolutionary ladder of life, it was more likely that the

concept of God was a creation of Man's ego. What better way to explain Man's invention of tools and the control over his environment than to explain it as Man being created in the image of a god and given dominion over all other creatures on earth.

No! Our universe had been created by a quantum fluctuation 'ex nihilo' as had probably an infinite number of other universes. Some of these 'parallel' universes might wink into existence for a few seconds and then disappear much the same as they had in Ian's computer simulation. Other universes might last for hours, days, or even billions of years as has ours. In some of them, life forms would be created and evolve – other universes would be lifeless. Ian was convinced that it was the creation of one of these billions of universes created randomly that explained the unique confluence of just the right conditions required to create a universe in which a life form was created that evolved into the human species. The fact that this species became master of its environment was understandable because of the evolution of the organism's hands and 'opposable' thumbs. The human brain evolved to the extent that it did because, although the human species was challenged by its environment, as was every other organism, unlike other organisms, the human species was not only able to meet that challenge but also control its environment by the use of its unique appendages. The continuing process of natural selection, genetic mutation, gene drift and gene flow had done the rest.

Ian did acknowledge that the human brain was definitely different from and superior to any other species. This also probably explained mankind's belief in a god because the right temporal lobe of the cerebral cortex in humans is much more developed than any other animal –with the exception of dolphins- and it is in this part of the brain that all so-called mystical experiences such as near-death experiences, UFO abductions, and the belief in a god, take place.

The writings of Carl Jung had explained these phenomena satisfactorily to Ian by identifying what Jung believed to be the existence of the 'collective unconscious'. According to Jung, as the human brain evolved over millennia, it stored 'forms' of its experiences -especially traumatic ones. These forms were systematically transferred genetically from human culture to human culture over the same millennia, resulting in identical 'archetypes' stored deep in the subconscious of all human brains. It was these archetypes, imbedded in the human psyche that led all humans to think similarly. At the same time, the physical evolution of the same part of the human brain allowed humans to be able to literally 'talk to themselves' which created the impression of one being able to communicate with something else -possibly, a creator.

But in spite of knowing all this and that the human race was doomed to eventually become extinct anyway, nothing changed for Ian. After his epiphany at Wabagowna, he realized that he had two choices. He could reject the universe as being a colossal joke perpetrated on the human race by some cosmic coincidence or he could accept the universe for what it was -warts and all! But accepting the universe for 'what it is' did not mean that the human race had to accept passively their current conditions. Although no culture, no race and no religion are intrinsically superior to any other culture, race or religion, Ian believed that collectively the human species could solve all its problems -at least

until the earth was hit by an asteroid, the earth's sun became a supernova or the universe came to an end. Until then, collectively, Man had the ability to create order from chaos, good from evil and love from hate.

The human species had a right to be part of the universe and to fight for its place there as had any other organism. And as a member of the human species, Ian and Rachel had a right to be there also. Yes, it would only be for an instant in eternity. But during that instant, they had the one privilege that no other member of their species would have -which was to love and be loved by each other. Ian was aware that some cynical scientists, such as Dawkins, claimed that 'love' was just a subtle manifestation of a 'selfish gene' in humans, but as far as Ian was concerned that did not make his love for Rachel and the birth of Amata any less real.

Nor did Ian forsake his new-found religion in spite of his knowledge. He continued to practice it faithfully. It wasn't because he believed in Judaism that he had converted. It was because it was the most expressive way in which he was able to give to Rachel what she needed most -his unconditional love. When asked by his non-Jewish friends why he had converted to Judaism, he would answer jocularly, "I'm hedging my bets!" And when asked aggressively by one of his atheistic scientific colleagues, 'You really don't believe that crap, do you?', Ian asked rhetorically "What is Truth?" and walked away, knowing that there was no answer to that question. He himself may not have known what 'truth' was, but he knew what 'love' was because it was Rachel who gave meaning to his life now -not 'truth'. It had been she who had put everything in perspective for him one night when they were locked in each other's arms, by asking the simple but profound question: "Ian, even if God is a creation of man's ego what harm can there be in acting as if there is a God, especially a loving one and all that it implies?"

Ian knew how important religion was to Rachel and to other people. And he knew that all religions were in a process of philosophical evolution. He just wished that they would hurry and get to the next level of enlightenment as he had. There was no doubt that the major religions of the world had played an important role in the development of civilization—even if at times negative ones, but it was time for them to move on. In the near future, most young people would be living in secular scientifically-oriented societies and would no longer be prepared to accept the superstitious explanations that had been naively accepted by their parents. These young people would demand that their own belief systems be based on scientific facts and logic. And for that reason alone, Ian had hope for the future because he believed that the next generation of young, educated people would at least accept the one logical statement that a young man, like themselves, had stated almost two thousand years ago: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' And that all else in all religions was 'commentary'.

Ian also prayed and meditated daily, as he had been taught to do when in the *ashram* in San Francisco. Not because he was being hypocritical but because he understood the purpose of Buddhist spiritual exercises, which was to allow his conscious mind to communicate with his unconscious mind and through that process find spiritual enlightenment. For he knew that reality consists of all of

one's experiences including thought, whether awake or asleep, because it is the brain that processes all thought regardless of its source.

In the meantime, Ian continued to lecture at the university. He had given up his research in Particle Physics and began to devote his time to teaching first year science students instead. When asked, by the Head of his Department, why he wanted to do so, he had replied with tongue in cheek, "Hey! Someone around here has to teach!" Other professors figuratively scratched their head and wondered why anyone would want to trade the solitude of the lab with the work and stress associated with teaching. When asked by them why he wanted to forsake the safety of research and instead, teach 'the little bastards', Ian's response to their enquiry had been, "Been there, done that!" referring to his own research years. What he was too embarrassed to tell them was that he loved watching 'the little bastards' eyes light up in the quest of new knowledge.

And then there was the time that he was asked to be one of the speakers at a symposium entitled 'The Future of the World' that the university was hosting. After listening to all the other speakers get up and expound upon their solutions for solving the earth's problems –from reducing pollution, increasing food production, finding new sources of energy, shooting all earth's garbage into the sun and even terra-forming other planets– Ian got up, walked to the podium, said into the microphone "The real solution to the world's problems is population control," walked back to his chair and sat down. The rest of the conference was spent, not debating the obvious truth of his statement, but how it might be implemented humanely.

October 15, 1978

It had been six years since little Amata had died and now Rachel herself was dying, her body ravaged by the same cancer as had Marina. Ian had discovered a small lump in Rachel's right breast one night during their love-making and had insisted that she have it examined. The biopsy had turned out to be malignant. Initial radiation and chemotherapy treatments had proved to be ineffective and Rachel's beautiful long raven-colored hair had fallen out. Radical mastectomies of both of Rachel's beautiful breasts and removal of the lymph nodes under her armpits and groin were performed in a futile attempt to prevent the cancer from metastasizing, but the cancer had reappeared -this time in the liver. It would only be a matter of time, before she would succumb to the cancer's insidious gnawing inside her body.

When they had discovered that Rachel's cancer was incurable and that it would only be a matter of time before she died, Ian had taken a leave of absence from the university and had rented a small cabin on the escarpment not far from where he had lived as a child. He had made all the preparations ahead of time for staying at the cabin, near Wabagowna. It was well-stocked with food and wood for fuel for the cool mornings and chilly evenings. A spring behind the cabin served as a source of fresh water and an outhouse in the bush served Ian's bodily functions while a commode indoors served Rachel's. When Rachel protested against Ian having to empty it, Ian stifled her objections with a kiss on the lips and with the Ladino expression that he had learned from her, but not understood the time that she had seduced him in her apartment, "*Te kero.*" ['I love you']. Ian had also told no one where they were so as not to be intruded upon.

Now they sat overlooking the valley of Ian's youth, watching the sun set slowly in the west. It had been a glorious month of October. Across the valley lay the smoky hills of autumn, their flanks covered with crimson forests. In the mornings the hills and the valley were filled with a blaze of glory as the rising sun shone on them. At the bottom of the valley a river meandered its way through a marsh towards Bay's End. With the exception of the occasional call of a blue-jay or the honking of geese as they flew overhead on their way south, all was quiet.

Every day for the last month, Ian and Rachel had risen together at dawn to watch the sun rise to the east of the cabin and give thanks to 'The One' for having created them and for having brought them together\*.

[ \*Ian and Rachel never did agree on what 'The One' was. Rachel was convinced that 'The One' was some kind of cosmic life-force, while Ian believed that 'The One' was in some way the result of the evolution of the human brain. But they both agreed that in the final analysis, it really didn't matter, as long as they both loved each other and were together.]

In spite of her illness, Rachel had insisted on participating in this ritual of watching the sun rise every morning, even if it meant usually going back to bed immediately afterwards. After this morning ritual, Ian would cook as much of a warm breakfast as he thought Rachel might be able to eat and take it to her on a

tray. Together they would have breakfast -Ian sitting in a chair beside the bed and Rachel propped up with pillows behind her back.

Sometimes, Rachel couldn't eat breakfast at all because of nausea, even though the doctors had discontinued the chemotherapy. Sometimes she was too tired to eat immediately, because of the morphine she was taking, and preferred to sleep a while longer. It was during these times that Ian would say "It's okay, *mi verdadero amor*," echoing Rachel's favorite phrase when addressing him, "I'll just put this aside for you to have later." He would then take the food out to the kitchen and return to sit with her. Most of the time, Rachel struggled to stay awake and chat with Ian, as if every second of her life left with him was precious to her.

It was during these moments together that they were able to talk about a lot of things. Before they were married, Ian had already told Rachel the story of his life and she had reviewed hers with him. But now, they were able to talk of other things -such as the phenomena of their existence.

One day, while sitting on the porch of the cabin, Ian pointed out the approximate location on the other side of the valley where he had his epiphany and the role the doe and fawn had played in making him realize how much he had loved Rachel and their unborn child. Wistfully, Rachel had said "I wish that I could see my little fawn again," referring to Amata. Rachel had no sooner spoken these words than a doe had walked out of the bush in front of the spring, followed by a fawn. But this time, instead of being alone, they were followed by a magnificent buck. On seeing Ian and Rachel, the buck had lowered his head and pawed the ground ready to protect his mate and their offspring, until the doe and the fawn melted back into the bush, upon which he had followed them. "Well, I'll be damned!" Ian had exclaimed. Tears had welled in Rachel's eyes and she had said softly to no one in particular, "Thank you." That afternoon, when Rachel was feeling better, Ian explained to Rachel what he knew of Carl Jung's theory of 'synchronicity' and the way in which it related to the events of that morning and his epiphany at Wabagowna.\*

[ \*It was Carl Jung who coined the term 'synchronicity' which can be defined as 'the occurrence of two meaningful non-causal related events existing very close to one another in time and space.

Together they discussed possible explanations for the phenomena. In the past, Ian had always considered these kinds of events as 'coincidences'. Now he was not so sure.

By noontime each day, Rachel would usually feel well enough to have Ian assist her to the rocking chair on the veranda, where he would tuck blankets around to keep her warm. Together they would sit there, talk to each other and glory in the beauty of the world around them. Occasionally, Ian would read poetry to Rachel and they would discuss what they believed it to be the poet's meaning of each poem. He reserved the reading of love poetry for the evenings.

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But today the sun was going down for the last time on their sanctuary because tomorrow Rachel and Ian would have to return to the city. Ian was expected to begin his first lecture of the new semester and, at home, Rachel would have to continue to suffer the pain of cancer and her aloneness without him. Ian winced at the thought of her dying without him being there.

The sun dipped below the horizon and the night air was becoming cool. Rachel smiled wanly at Ian from her rocking chair on the porch and said. "I'm getting a little tired and chilly, Ian. Can we go inside now?"

"*Si mi único verdadero amor\**." [\*Ladino: Yes, my only true love]

Rachel blushed shyly as she always did when he addressed her in these special words of endearment for they were always the code-words for wanting to make love to her -even if it just meant cuddling on a blanket in front of the open fireplace in the cabin, as it had lately.

Although the mornings and afternoons were also special to Ian and Rachel, it was the evenings together that they enjoyed the most. For the evenings were always just for the two of them where not even 'The One' could intrude. It was during those evenings that they would spread a sleeping bag and pillows, lie down together in front of the glowing fireplace and Ian would read to Rachel love poetry as Martha had to him. Sometimes they would just listen to music, locked in each other's arms and gaze into the open burning hearth.

They both got up, Ian putting his arm around Rachel's shoulder, not so much to support her as to become one with her and kissed her on the lips.

"Mmmm, that's nice," Rachel said, slipping her tongue inside of Ian's mouth.

"Rachel, you're bad!" Ian joked, knowing that there was no 'bad' nor 'good' now. There was only Rachel.

"If you think that I'm bad now, Ian, just wait until I get you inside," Rachel whispered, blowing into his ear.

Arm in arm, they went into the cabin, Ian slipping a little sideways to allow Rachel to enter first.

"Shall I build up the fire, *mi querida\**?" asked Ian. [\*Ladino: 'my beloved']

"Yes, that would be nice," replied Rachel. "But first I'd like a drink to warm me up."

"Sure thing," Ian said and went into the kitchen, poured two full glasses of cognac -one for each of them and brought them back into the living-room on a small tray as was the ritual. "Service with a smile," he grinned and offered one of them to Rachel.

Rachel took her glass of cognac, twirled it around in the glass a bit watching the amber liquid cascade slowly down the inside of the glass, inhaled it and then drank it slowly. In the meantime, Ian busied himself with building up the fire.

Putting on a music tape with some of their favorite songs on it, Ian said, "Come and lie down beside me."

"That would be nice," Rachel said, but winced slightly with pain as she slowly lay down on the mattress that Ian had thoughtfully placed in front of the fire ahead of time. Ian lay down beside her.

"You're not trying to get me drunk and seduce me, are you Ian?" Rachel giggled, as he cuddled close to her.

"I love you Rachel. I will always love you." Ian said with finality.

"I know," Rachel said, equally serious but not needing to tell Ian how much she loved him. Her love for him that first night he stayed in her apartment had demonstrated that.

Ian got up drank his own glass of cognac and lay back down beside Rachel. She cuddled closer to him, his pelvis finding the shape of her buttocks. He wrapped his right arm over her right arm and over what was left of her right breast. Rachel yawned. The excessive amount of morphine that he had placed in his and her brandy had begun to take effect. Ian was already beginning to feel sleepy himself. He had left a note for Lorna, telling her where to find them. Now it was only a matter of time before Rachel and he would be together forever.

They lay as spoons,  
His arm about her twined.  
They gazed into the fire.  
No words between them passed.  
Outside the stars shone on,  
In their eternity.

END

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